University of Exeter
Centre for Rural Policy Research

CRPR Report

The Value of a Rural Estate

The social and economic value of Clinton Devon Estates

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 1

List of Figures and Tables 5

1. An introduction to Clinton Devon Estates and the operating context for contemporary rural estates 7

1.1 Introduction 7

1.2 An introduction to Clinton Devon Estates 7

1.3 The contemporary operating context for rural estates 9

2. Measuring value generation: background and methodology 16

2.1 Introduction 16

2.2 Benchmarking rural estates contributions to economic, social and environmental indicators 16

2.3 The value of a rural estate project methodology 22

3. Clinton Devon Estates: values and building social capital with stakeholders 27

3.1 Introduction 27

3.2 Overview of Clinton Devon Estates 27

3.3 The core values of Clinton Devon Estates 30

3.4 Building relationships with stakeholders 34

4. Sustainable rural economy and rural employment 40

4.1 Introduction 40

Clinton Devon Estates core operations: a strategic overview 40

4.2 Views of Clinton Devon Estates' stakeholders 46

4.3 Overview of economic contribution of Clinton Devon Estates operations and associated businesses 50

4.4 The direct economic impact of the Clinton Devon Estates 51

4.5 The economic impact of supplier spending by Clinton Devon Estates 52

The economic impact of tenant and licensed businesses operating on the Estate 53

4.6 Social value of employment 54

5. Placeshaping 56

5.1 Introduction 56

5.2 Stewardship, the long-view and relationship with place 56
5.3 Housing developments 57
5.4 Renewable energy projects and energy security 58
5.5 Nature recovery and placeshaping 60
5.6 Stakeholder views 65
5.7 Social value of placeshaping activities 70
6. Supporting communities, involvement and access 73
6.1 Introduction 73
6.2 Managing a historic residential lettings portfolio 73
6.3 Supporting residential tenants 74
6.4 Community access and engagement 75
6.5 Placeshaping and community involvement 76
6.6 Stakeholder views on support for community 77
6.7 Social value of supporting communities 82
7. Thought leadership and knowledge generation 86
7.1 Introduction 86
7.2 Openness, transparency and thought leadership 86
7.3 Supporting outdoor education 87
7.4 Learning from data and citizen science 88
7.5 Knowledge generation and contributions to research 89
7.6 Understanding the past to inform the future 90
7.7 Stakeholder views on knowledge generation 91
7.8 Social value of supporting knowledge generation 96
8. Conclusions 99
8.1 Introduction 99
8.2 Summary of findings 99
8.3 Summary of economic and social value generated 101
8.4 Areas for future research 102
References 104

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. 1: Visual representation of Clinton Devon Estate's key stakeholder relationships.....9
Figure 2. 1: An overview of the mixed methods and analysis techniques deployed in the Value of a Rural Estate project.......... 23
Figure 3. 1: Stakeholder responses, core values of Clinton Devon Estates, percentage agree/disagree 31
Figure 3. 2: Stakeholder responses, importance of values to stakeholders, percentage important/not important 32
Table 3. 1: Directional difference between stakeholders perception of Clinton Devon Estate values and values of importance to stakeholders/stakeholder organisations 32
Figure 3. 3: Quadrant representation – core values of Clinton Devon Estate (mean) against importance of values to stakeholders (mean) 33
Figure 3. 4: Stakeholder responses, trust, engagement and social network related statements, percentage agree/disagree 36
Figure 4. 1: Farm tenants' views, percentage of cohort agree/disagree 46
Figure 4.2: Commercial tenants' views, percentage of cohort agree/disagree 48
Figure 4.3: The views of Clinton Devon Estates employees, apprentices and those on work placement, percentage of cohort agree/disagree 49
Figure 4.4: chart demonstrating the proportion of direct GVA across Clinton Devon Estates operations (2024/25).......... 51
Table 4. 1: GVA direct operations of Clinton Devon Estate and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation group.......... 52
Table 4. 2: GVA Clinton Devon Estate spending with suppliers - direct, indirect and combined direct and indirect GVA.......... 52
Table 4. 3: GVA direct operations of farm and commercial tenants and licensed businesses operating on the estate.......... 53
Table 4. 4: Indirect GVA contributions of farm and commercial tenants and licensed businesses 54
Table 4. 5: Wellbeing uplift of employment opportunities associated with Clinton Devon Estate 54
Table 4. 6: Wellbeing and economic uplift associated with employing apprentices and interns 55
Figure 5. 1: Stakeholder views on how well Clinton Devon Estates carries out its goals, percentage agree/disagree 66
Figure 5. 2: Tenant and leisure visitor place-based satisfaction, percentage satisfied/dissatisfied 67
Table 5. 1: Social value generated, affordable homes built by the Estate (10 year average). 71
Table 5. 2: Potential social value, future affordable homes (planning permission granted).. 71
Table 5. 3: Recreational welfare value access to greenspace across Clinton Devon Estates 72
Figure 6. 1: Residential tenant responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements....... 78
Figure 6. 2: Leisure visitor responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements.......... 80
Table 6. 1: Social value calculations - impact of evictions avoided.......... 82
Table 6. 2: Social value calculations – impact of eviction.......... 83
Table 6. 3: Social value calculation - satisfaction with landlord, distributional analysis........ 83

Table 6. 4: Social value calculation – satisfaction with landlord, analysis by tenant type 84
Table 6. 5: Social value calculation – costs to society of poor housing 84
Table 6. 6: Social value calculation – attendance at community events hosted by Clinton Devon or PHCT 84
Table 6. 7: Social value calculation – attendance at public engagement events hosted by Clinton Devon or PHCT 85
Table 6. 8: Social value calculation – dealing with flytipping 85
Figure 7. 1: Project partner responses, percentage agree/disagree 92
Figure 7. 2: volunteer responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements 93
Table 7. 1: Social value calculations – outdoor education offer (actual 2024/25) 97
Table 7. 2: Social value calculations – enhanced outdoor education offer (LORP) 97
Table 7. 3: Social value calculations – wellbeing uplift volunteering 97
Table 7. 4: Social value calculations – accessing archives 98
Table 8. 1: Estimates of total direct GVA across Clinton Devon Estates operations (2024/25) 101
Table 8. 2: Estimate of total measurable social value generated across Clinton Devon Estates and PHCT 102

1. An introduction to Clinton Devon Estates and the operating context for contemporary rural estates

1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the Value of a Rural Estate research project by outlining some of the most pressing social, economic and environmental regulatory and market drivers for rural estates, and in particular, our case study estate – Clinton Devon Estates. We start the chapter by introducing Clinton Devon Estates, providing an overview of the Estate over time and taking a brief look at the Estate's core activities and future ambitions. We then take a more general look at the context in which contemporary rural estates are operating, first looking at national regulatory change and relevant Government targets, then outlining the local context in which Clinton Devon Estates is operating. Subsequent chapters outline the methodology and rationale for the project (Chapter 2) and then outline the thematic findings, along with relevant calculations to estimate the social and economic contribution of the Estate (Chapters 4 through 7), finally Chapter 8 concludes the findings and recommends some areas for future research.

1.2 An introduction to Clinton Devon Estates

Clinton Devon Estates over time

Clinton Devon Estates, under the leadership of the 23rd Baron Lord Clinton, owns and manages 10,000 hectares of land across three separate Estates: the Heanton Estate in North Devon; the Beer and Clinton Estates in East Devon; and, a major part of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths. The Clinton Barony was formed in 1299 and is amongst one of the oldest in England. Across its history, the Estate has been responsible for the stewardship of this land: building homes and churches; planting forests; producing food and timber; and supporting rural prosperity.

Throughout its 700 year history, the Estate has adapted to the circumstances of each generation, maintaining its commitment to stewardship of the land while responding to changing social, political and economic imperatives. As is well-known, many rural estates were sold in the early twentieth century, often to existing farm tenants in response to death duties and declining returns. As a result, between 1908 and 1988 the proportion of the agricultural land area let to tenant farmers in Great Britain fell from 88% to 38% (Winter et al., 1990). Clinton Devon Estates was not immune to the challenges which culminated in the sale, in 1958, of over 15,000 acres and over 100 residential and commercial properties in north Devon. Dependence on the traditional mainstay of landed estate income – forestry, agricultural rental income, and small village properties – was not a recipe for success as the second half of the twentieth century unfolded. Consequently, there was a policy in the 1970s and 1980s to reduce the Estate's high level of dependence on agriculture and move to a more diversified set of income sources, so that by the mid-1990s agricultural income accounted for just under 40% of total gross Estate income with investments in business parks, residential and commercial property providing a majority of the income. At this time, the Estate also developed a number of business ventures of its own, but from around 2000 these were largely sold off with the Estate focussing its efforts on rental incomes whether from agriculture, residential property or commercial property. Forestry is a notable exception with the Estate continuing to actively manage its woodland resources, along with a number of in-hand farming operations.

However, it would be a mistake to characterise the Estate as simply a property and land management enterprise making investment decisions solely to maximise returns for shareholders. There are no shareholders. Rather there are trustees and estate employees whose responsibility it is to work alongside the Clinton family to manage the Estate in accordance with the values and aspirations of the family which lie the heart of the estate's strategic planning. Moreover, the Clinton family (and the earlier Rolle family), through residence and personal responsibility, has a high level of commitment to the places and people directly and indirectly connected to the Estate's decisions and actions. Twenty years ago Forum for the Future highlighted the role that rural estates could play in promoting sustainability through performing a 'balancing act of maintaining tradition and roots while responding to change,' in order to maintain 'the estate for future generations' (Forum for the future, 2006, p. 9).

Clinton Devon Estates today

The contemporary estate of Clinton Devon includes 8,000 hectares of farmland, which represents approximately 70% of total landholdings, farmed in-hand or by tenant farmers with longstanding relationships with the Estate. The Estate's home farm follows nature friendly farming practice across its 850ha dairy and arable enterprises. Across the 1,900 hectares of woodland, the Estate's forestry enterprise produces 10,000 tonnes of sustainable timber per annum. The Estate also comprises over 1,000 hectares of open access common land. In 2006, the Estate established the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust (now a National Nature Reserve), which manages the collection of land parcels which make up the Pebblebed Heaths for conservation and public access. The Pebblebed Heaths represent a rare and important habitat, increasingly at risk across Europe, and subject to a number of European and national conservation designations. The Estate also provides farm tenancies, commercial tenancies and residential tenancies across its land and building portfolio to local farmers, businesses and families. Alongside, day-to-day management of its core business, the Estate has pursued a number of landscape scale and commercial development projects, which includes: the Lower Otter Restoration Project, a climate adaption and intertidal habitat creation scheme; the Heaths to Sea Landscape Recovery Project (LRP), (subject to further approvals from DEFRA); renewable energy development projects, including solar energy and battery storage projects; and, commercial and residential development projects. More detail on these areas of activity can be found in Chapters 4 – 7.

The Estate is ambitious and forward-looking, with key aspirations outlined in its 2030 Strategy to meet climate adaptation, net-zero and multifunctional land use targets alongside delivering financial sustainability (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021a). The Estate is a member of DEFRA's National Estates for Nature group (NEN) which brings together England's most significant landholders from across the public, private and third sectors, managing collectively c. 10% of England's land. As part of its commitment to this group, the Estate has already published its estate management plan, in which Clinton Devon has committed to ambitious and stretching targets to: restore key heathland, riparian and inter-tidal habitats; increase populations of key species; drive forward nature friendly farming practices across in-hand and tenant farms; pursue sustainable silvicultural practices and restore broadleaf woodland; and, enhance and restore waterways and water quality (Clinton Devon Estates, 2026a).

Clinton Devon Estates and its stakeholders

Clinton Devon Estates maintain longstanding relationships with a variety of stakeholders, who hold closer or weaker ties to the organisation. Stakeholders include residential, commercial and farm tenants, volunteers and citizen scientists, local community groups, contractors and a wide variety of strategic partners. Figure 1.1 illustrates the variety of stakeholders with whom the Estate interacts and the strength of ties between the Estate and different stakeholder groups.

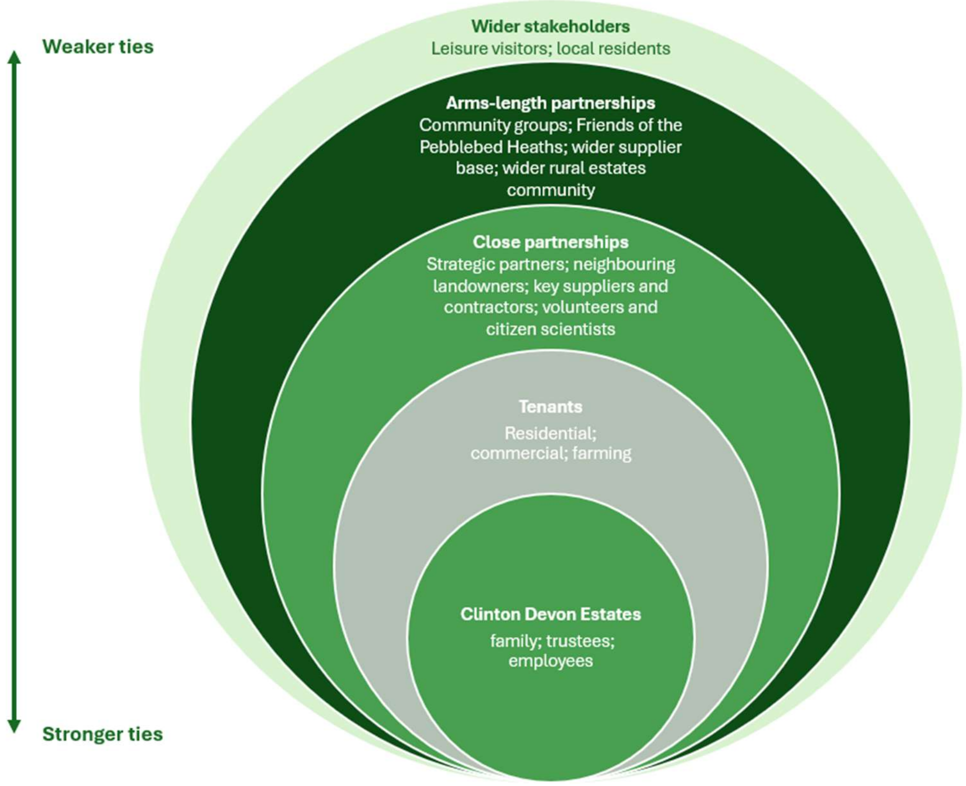

Figure 1. 1: Visual representation of Clinton Devon Estate's key stakeholder relationships

The views and experiences of these stakeholders form a key part of the methodology of this study. More information on how stakeholder views have been incorporated in this research are included in Chapter 2 – methodology and reflected across the findings Chapters 3 – 7.

1.3 The contemporary operating context for rural estates

National context

In contrast to the largely devolved responsibilities held by large landowners in previous eras, large landowners are being called upon by Government to contribute to achieving wider environmental goals to meet the longer-term needs of society. There are now increasing systemic pressures on UK land to deliver, in aggregate: enhanced carbon sequestration; restored habitats; increased biodiversity; and, resilience to changing climates, as well as the more traditional productive, residential and commercial outputs. UK Government has committed to a range of ambitious targets to address these challenges which includes:

- Net zero emissions by 2050 (HM Government, 2021), specifically with reference to land:
  - 75% of farmers in England will be engaged in low carbon practices by 2030, rising to 85% by 2035.
  - priority investment in peat restoration, woodland creation and management.
- Environmental targets arising from The Environment Act 2021, including the need to:
  - halt the decline in species populations by 2030, and then increase populations by at least 10% to exceed current levels by 2042
  - create or restore in excess of 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels
  - reduce nutrient pollution in water by reducing phosphorus loading from treated wastewater by 80% by 2037 and reducing nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment from agriculture to the water environment by 40% by 2037
  - increase tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050 (DEFRA, 2022a, 2022b)
- Formal commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030 (30 x 30 commitment) (Markwick, 2023)

The Land Use Framework (LUF) published in March 2026 sets out four guiding principles for better land use decisions - multifunctionality, right use, right place, future-ready decisions and adaptive by design (DEFRA, 2026). Whilst all land managers are encouraged, "to factor in these principles in the way they manage their land," (2026, p. 29), as noted in section 1.2, Clinton Devon Estates is already at the forefront of these developments. The Land Use Framework reports on the commitment that major landowners in the National Estate for Nature (NEN) group, which includes Clinton Devon, have already committed to applying the principles in their estate management plans from April 2026:

> "The work of the National Estate for Nature group will then provide practical examples of how the principles can be applied to land management decisions, which we will disseminate for others to learn from." (2026, p. 29)

The Environment Act (2021) also introduced Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), which bring together partners in local areas to produce statutory spatial plans, which aim to map, protect, and enhance biodiversity. The plans look to incorporate local knowledge in order to connect habitats and support species recovery in local areas (GOV.UK, 2023). While LNRS do not mandate landowners to make changes on their land, they can help landowners to match land management actions with local priorities and available funding for environmental actions.

The overall post-Brexit Agricultural Transition, covered in the Land Use Framework and elsewhere, presents significant challenges to the traditional farming portfolios of large landowning estates in England. Set against a backcloth of falling or fluctuating farm incomes, the Agriculture Act 2020 oversaw the transformation of the previous area-based agricultural payment system into a public money for public goods focused set of schemes where funding is contingent on the provision of environmental goods and services by landowners and occupiers. These schemes include: the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), including the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) as well as the Landscape Recovery Scheme, in which consortia can bid to become a LRP. These new funding streams not only ask rural estates to farm differently on in-hand farms, but also present challenges for supporting tenants to engage with longer term environmental ambitions on tenanted farms, as well as encouraging partnership working to deliver landscape scale ambitions as set out in both the LUF and LNRS. Large rural estates with long-term ambitions for their land may also be better placed than many smaller farms to leverage private investment for nature by engaging with emerging biodiversity and carbon markets, though considerable uncertainties remain about the long term implications of engaging in these new schemes, which can leave some landowners wary (RICS, 2024).

Concurrently, pressure on the public purse has led Government to seek to raise revenue from land based capital by reducing agricultural and forestry exemptions to Inheritance Tax. Changes announced in April 2025 broaden the scope of Agricultural Property Relief to also apply to land entered into Government backed environmental schemes (HM Treasury & DEFRA, 2024). However, from April 2026, only the first £2.5 million of combined agricultural and business property will be eligible for 100% relief from inheritance tax (£5m if there is also a spouse or civil partner); over this amount, landowners will access 50% relief from inheritance tax (GOV.UK, 2025). This will increase the tax burden many larger farms and estates. These changes may serve to incentivise certain business structures and types of enterprise on rural estates in future, such as in-hand trading businesses held in trust or family partnerships.

Reports in the press in advance of the June 2025 Spending Review suggested that large landowners were likely to be made ineligible for Nature Friendly Farming funds allocated by DEFRA (Horton & reporter, 2025a, 2025b). However, while DEFRA did move to reduce payments for large landowners in the Spending Review, rather than target environmental farm payment schemes this reduction represented a hastening of the removal of those delinked payments which were transitioning the industry from area-based payments under the Common Agricultural Policy. DEFRA's framing of this change that they were, 'ending the era of payouts to large and wealthy landowners for simply owning land,' (DEFRA, 2025b) still provides a bold statement of policy intent. It could be interpreted that DEFRA expect a greater level of reporting and transparency from large landowners in receipt of these funds vis-à-vis their action on nature recovery.

Alongside this considerable contextual change, as already noted, the NEN Group members are being asked to drive delivery of Environment Act targets and other nature recovery ambitions like 30by30 on their estates (DEFRA, 2025a). This includes working together to establish a 'minimum standard' for nature provision within large estates (NEN, 2025), and reporting on progress to meet and exceed these targets through the creation of new land management plans (see for example Clinton Devon Estates, 2026a). It is anticipated that in time these obligations will be rolled out to the wider rural estate community. Importantly, DEFRA's justification for this group's constitution recognises that these landowners are also crucial to the delivery of other key Government ambitions including building 1.5

million new homes, increasing energy security and ensuring sustainable food production (DEFRA, 2025a).

Where historically a typical large rural estate could be expected to have made the majority of income from in-hand and farm lets, increasingly rural estates are deriving a larger proportion of income from residential and commercial lettings and other business enterprises (Rhodes & Davidson, 2024). Within this area of activity, rural estates are also subject to a changing operating context. As recognised by the NEN group, large landowners are also being looked to, to deliver new and emerging Government targets in this area including:

- Net zero by 2050, specifically of interest:
  - decarbonised electricity supply by 2035
  - accelerated deployment of low-cost renewable generation, facilitated through the contracts for difference scheme
  - long-term regulatory standards to upgrade Privately Rented Homes to EPC C by 2028
  - minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC Band B by 2030 for privately rented commercial buildings in England and Wales
- The updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DHCLG, 2024), specifically of interest:
  - mandatory housing targets for local planning authorities to deliver an allocation of 1.5 million new homes and to deliver 150 new infrastructure projects
  - changes to green belt eligibility for housing development, including identifying some low priority green belt land as 'grey belt' and 'golden rules' to release green belt land for development
  - local planning authorities must demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and identify a housing land supply buffer of a minimum of 5% and up to 20% where supply has historically fallen short
- Planning and infrastructure bill
  - Local Fund for Nature
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (UK Government, 2024)
  - clean energy sources to generate at least as much electricity as is consumed over a typical year and account for at least 95% of Great Britain's generation by 2030
  - investment in energy infrastructure projects, including clean energy generation, storage capacity and backup capacity
- National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England (Environment Agency, 2022)

In 2021, the UK government made it mandatory for larger businesses in particular to comply with the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and record and publish their scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions (BEIS, 2021). Similar obligations surrounding the disclosure of companies' nature-related dependencies and impacts was announced in 2023 within the currently voluntary Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), obligations which are likely to be formalised within mandatory reporting in future (Green Finance Institute, 2025). While these obligations currently reside with the largest companies in the UK, industry observers suggest that small and medium sized companies are likely to face similar reporting obligations in future (Savills, 2024). Indeed, within food supply chains detailed emissions reporting is becoming a more common expectation of supply chain actors of all sizes (Boukherroub et al., 2024).

For rural estates with historic housing stock, the changes to minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) for both residential and commercial properties can present significant challenges. Current landlords need to ensure their housing stock meets a minimum EPC rating of E, which can be difficult for older housing stock with historic features such as solid walls, sash windows or thatched roofs for example. Although there are opportunities to register older properties as exempt, where improving the EPC rating to E is impossible or prohibitively expensive, exemptions must be applied for per property and only last for 5 years before expiring (DENZ, 2025). This, along with other changes to domestic property lettings, such as those contained within the Renters Rights Act (2025) which is soon to come into force, have resulted so-called 'landlords exodus' with one in four considering or actively selling stock (Callaghan, 2026).

Local operating context

Clinton Devon Estates manages some of the most beautiful landscape in Devon, yet to outsiders the scenic views and leisure opportunities might mask the challenging socio-economic circumstances experienced by some of the local population, and indeed some of the Estate's residential tenants. Rural poverty is particularly acute in Devon exacerbated by high housing prices compared to low wages, insecure work and poor transport connectivity (DCC, 2024). Recent research has found that people in rural areas pay a 'rural penalty' spending significantly more to attain the same standard of living (LRRG, 2026). Housing quality is also poor, with Devon falling within the most deprived 20% nationally for indoor environment (DCC, 2024) and many households reliant on price-volatile heating oil to heat their homes (LRRG, 2026). In addition to the challenges of supporting Devon residents experiencing rural poverty, recent years have seen significant inward migration to Devon from other areas. Analysis of the 2021 census showed that the East Devon population had risen by 13.9% since 2011, with the West Devon population rising by 6.7% (DCC, 2022). There is considerable pressure on housing supply to meet the needs of this growing population; East Devon District Council, for example, is struggling to meet the Government's target to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply of deliverable sites with only 3.5 year supply available in March 2025 (EDDC, 2025b).

Rural estates are encouraged to participate in local place shaping ambitions as led by Local Authorities, in consultation with local communities. For East Devon, one of two main administrative area of relevance to the Clinton Devon Estates (the other being Torridge), the most significant ambitions and targets include:

- East Devon District Council Economic Development Strategy supported projects including those:
    - delivering clean energy, green finance, digital innovations for example
    - businesses within the local food and drink sector and farm business diversification
    - increased provision of workspaces in the local area
    - projects which seek to directly link climate action and nature recovery with East Devon's local culture and tourism offer (EDDC, 2024c).

- East Devon District Council Local Plan 2020 – 2042, including:
    - annual housing provision of 950 dwellings, or 19,100 over the scope of the latest plan, 23% of which should be affordable homes
    - 90.66 hectares of employment provision sites allocated including office space, industrial space and storage and distribution use
    - new commercial and residential developments to meet relevant energy efficiency standards
    - prioritise clean energy generation and storage developments
    - to conserve and enhance the environment, landscape, historic character, archaeological value, wildlife, agricultural, recreational, and natural resource value of countryside areas (EDDC, 2025a).
- Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy – which provides a high-level strategic framework for organisations looking to take action to support or restore nature (Devon Local Nature Partnership, 2025).

These priority strategies and plans are underpinned by a number of additional East Devon specific strategies, plans and assessments with relevance for local rural landowners. Of particular relevance to Clinton Devon Estates include:

- The East Devon Infrastructure Delivery Plan (EDDC, 2024b)
- East Devon District Council – Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (EDDC, 2024a)
- East Devon and Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment (BHNL, 2024)
- Tree, Hedge & Woodland Strategy for East Devon 2024 – 2034 (EDDC, 2024d)
- Other East Devon District Council local strategies: public health, homelessness, poverty reduction, leisure, open spaces etc.

Clinton Devon Estates is also a member of the East Devon Natural Landscape partnership. Members of this partnership have committed to:

- To restore or create 2691ha of new habitat outside of protected sites by 2042
- Bring 80% of SSSIs into favourable condition by 2042
- Other priority areas outside of protected sites continues to be managed in favourable condition
- Increase tree canopy cover by 807ha by 2050
- Increase the diversity and abundance of wildlife across the landscape
- Improve the water quality of all catchments (EDNL, 2025)

While Clinton Devon Estates is currently working within the frameworks determined by local district councils, Devon is one of 21 local areas nationally which is undergoing a process of unitisation. Local Government unitisation will see the administrative and governance functions of County and District councils combined. In Devon this is expected to result in unitary councils of Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay, plus an additional rural Devon unitary (DCC, 2026). New unitised local authorities are expected to be operational in Devon by April 2028 (DCC, 2025). For Clinton Devon Estates, there may be benefits to having more of its landholdings under the same jurisdiction, however, the process of reorganisation will likely require the Estate to build new relationships and work under different processes and structures than was the case formerly. It is also likely that Clinton Devon will need to work with different Neighbourhood Area Committees representing areas of North or East Devon.

2. Measuring value generation: background and methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the context for measurement and reporting of social, environmental and economic outcomes attainment within the rural estates peer group. Section 2.2 provides an assessment of efforts to introduce benchmarking tools to the rural estates section and outlines progress made to date by individual estates and groups of estates to measure and report on their progress across a variety of outcomes. Building on these findings, section 2.3 introduces the methodology adopted for this project, which seeks to complement the existing and ongoing measurement and reporting work undertaken by Clinton Devon Estates, address gaps in Clinton Devon Estate's current understanding and introduce a methodology which other Estates might be able to adopt and report on in future.

2.2 Benchmarking rural estates contributions to economic, social and environmental indicators

There has been growing interest from within the rural estates community to better understand and measure the contribution estates make to wider economic, social and environmental ambitions for local areas. The 2000s saw an increasing interest in the notion of the 'sustainable rural estate' (Forum for the future, 2006). While mostly focused on identifying the environmental goods and services that could potentially be provided by rural estates, Forum for the Future's (2006) paper did highlight how rural estates with high connectivity to the wider community could foster innovation, act as rural hubs for business and support the growth of human capital within their workforce and tenant enterprises. Beedell et al (2012) studied a sample of rural estates in the East Midlands to measure their impact in terms of jobs provided, workspaces, residential properties, renewable energy, nature and greenspace, community infrastructure and local distinctiveness. While capturing the diversity of services provided by rural estates within this geography, these findings were largely presented without context or relevant comparators (Beedell et al., 2012).

Subsequent studies led by the industry points to the importance of contextualising rural estate's activity across a range of metrics. Barnston's (2020) report suggested that rural estates have a 'moral duty' to account not just for the profit they generate, but also for their environmental custodianship (natural capital), and care for the community (social capital). However, Barnston's survey of rural estates suggested there was no unified approach to benchmarking performance used across the sector, and little use of natural or social capital accounting tools to measure extra-economic performance (2020, p. 9). Similarly, research by RICS (2022) suggests that despite recognition with the rural estates community of the growing importance of sharing performance data in order to 'justify income from both public and private sources,' the use of benchmarking tools is largely 'inconsistent' (RICS, 2022, p. 4). The report observes a general 'reticence to taking a whole-estate approach' from rural estates which are more comfortable with measuring capitals: economic, natural, social etc. (RICS, 2022, p. 7). However, it is not clear from this first stage of the RICS benchmarking report how a 'whole-estate approach' might be measured and benchmarked given the variety of activity within, and across rural estates. The RICS (2022) report points to current and future areas of estate activity which may be useful for the sector to benchmark in future. Key areas identified include:

- diversification,
- social (people) and environmental (planet) 'capitals' including: natural capital and ecosystems, clean water, air purification, biodiversity; social capital, stakeholder relationships, health and well-being, community cohesion, education; Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), actions for the local community, provision of cricket pitches, schools, shops, 'affordable/social' houses, etc.; sense of place and aesthetic 'value'
- efficiency in terms of land use/labour/return on investment
- whole estate, even landscape, benchmarking
- the estate's wider environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and CSR performance in terms of diversity and contribution to the local community will be under greater scrutiny
- land ownership accountability to demonstrate optimum land use (through benchmarking) to justify ownership and tenure
- benchmarking to prove quality and value of management
- marketing and supply chains, including scope 3 carbon emissions
- infrastructure and connectivity
- data and innovation (RICS, (2022).

Consultants and advisors to the industry, such as Knight Frank, Savills and Carter Jonas offer some indicators against which estates can benchmark their financial performance against others. Although these sources recognise the importance of diversified and alternative income streams for rural estates, typically these indicators suggest average net profit per hectare for traditional estate activities and the contribution these make to overall gross income across the estate's portfolio (Rhodes & Davidson, 2024; Savills, 2018). These consultancy reports often profile different estates and their individual performance targets. For example, Savills (2024) profiles the social value performance targets of the Hatfield Park estate, but in this case without indicating the size of the estate which might provide per hectare context for these types of performance targets.

Measuring economic value generation

Biggar Economics (2025) conducted an economic impact assessment of Scotland's Crown Estate by measuring the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the estate's operations, years of employment and jobs generated across the different sectors of the estates' operations. For certain sectors of the Scotland Crown Estate portfolio, published multipliers or national datasets were used to estimate indirect expenditure resulting from the estate's activities.

Between 2020 and 2022 the Devonshire Group undertook a research project to better understand and measure the impact its constituent estates have on the wider economies in which they are situated, with the aim of doubling the benefit they have to their local economies over the following decade (Devonshire Group, 2022). This contribution to the economy was measured using GVA, considered in the context of: regional economies; regional employment; direct operations of the estate; impact of visitors; and, impact of estate tenants. It is not clear from the (2022) report the exact methodology used to determine the wider economic impacts of employee, visitor and tenant spending, for example. The Devonshire Group's (2024) impact report utilises the same economic measurement tools to identify the impact of the estates' activity on key priorities, for example:

- Economic impact measured through Gross Valued Added (GVA) generated across the estates and the extent to which this has increased the since baseline year.
- Spend with local suppliers, local defined as within a 30-mile radius of each estate in the group.
- Targets for annual spend on repair and restoration

Measuring natural capital and the provision of environmental goods and services

Following the UN's (2025) System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) guidance, the ONS (2023) Principles of Natural capital Accounting offers a consistent framework for UK practitioners to measure and compare natural capital stocks. Natural capital accounts are broadly comprised of the measurement of the constituent elements of an ecosystem (e.g. soil carbon, pollinator species, vegetation), the condition of these elements, the public or private benefits or services they provide (e.g. clean air, carbon capture, timber) and the value placed on these elements (e.g. through biodiversity net gain, or carbon markets). Given the potential for the implementation of natural capital frameworks to positively influence land management decision making, there has been a 'growing advocacy' for the approach from UK policymakers (Holden, 2022, p. 209).

A number of rural estates have begun the process of baselining and measuring their natural capital stocks. Studies commissioned as part of the ELMS test and trial point to the ability for rural estates to measure in monetary terms the private and public environmental benefits associated with certain aspects of agricultural land management, including food and timber production and carbon sequestration for example (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b; Eftec, 2021; Eftec et al., 2024). However, there remains significant difficulty in accurately measuring other benefits monetarily, including species diversity, water quality regulation and flood management (Eftec et al., 2024). The availability of appropriate data varies from location to location, can be expensive to access or can show a disconnect between national datasets and on the ground knowledge (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b). Holden points out that most published studies in farmed estates do not collect their own empirical data to inform their natural capital accounts (Holden, 2022, p. 37). Some studies use reasonable proxies for difficult-to-measure aspects of environmental benefit creation and maintenance, including a 'replacement cost' of recreating the biodiverse habitat elsewhere, all the while noting that this fails to capture the complexity of the value offered by biodiverse habitats (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b; Eftec, 2021). Other difficulties reported within ELMS test and trial natural capital accounting reports included: accurately capturing the interrelationship between different aspects of the natural capital account; difficulty accurately forecasting future natural capital stocks and linking these to management practices; difficulties measuring natural capital where estates do not routinely measure certain conditions e.g. soil carbon (Eftec, 2021). Holden (2022) also points out that many farming estates who have participated in natural capital accounting exercises have not openly published their results (p. 37).

Other estates have focused specifically on carbon reporting, measuring their scope 1, 2 and, in some cases, scope 3 carbon emissions and monitoring their efforts to reduce these. A report for the Jahama highland estate estimated the carbon sequestered within the different habitat types of the estate, although this only related to atmospheric carbon and did not consider the impacts of other greenhouse gas emissions e.g. grazing livestock or vehicle emissions (Cowap, 2021). Blenheim Palace estate's (2023) carbon emissions report is more comprehensive, estimating scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, including using visitor data to estimate the share of emissions generated by overseas visitors. Similarly, the Devonshire Groups' (2024) impact report also included monitoring of carbon emissions generated by the estates alongside a measure of the percentage of demand generated by renewables. The emissions from different estate activities are expressed as a percentage of total group emissions and includes an indication of scope 3 emissions, including emissions associated with visitors to the estate (Devonshire Group, 2024). For all the estates using carbon emissions measurement tools to track environmental performance, there persist significant methodological challenges in developing accurate estimates of carbon emissions associated with different activities. For example, carbon emissions estimates of raw materials or products tend to be based on broad, industry-wide estimates making nuanced calculations to understand the differences between different suppliers within a supply chain difficult.

Biggar Economics' (2023) report looked to measure the contribution of Scottish estates to Scotland's wellbeing economy, including environmental contribution of estates, provision of natural capital and support for biodiversity, for example. This study largely attributed estate environmental contribution against other studies of Scotland as a whole by calculating the percentage of hectarage managed by rural estates and apportioning accordingly.

Measuring social wellbeing, social capital and social return on investment

Despite social impact being a common theme with rural estates' published impact reports, there was no evidence of a common methodological approach to measuring and contextualising rural estates' efforts to improve social outcomes for their local communities and stakeholders through their activities. The Devonshire Group's (2024) impact report largely reports upon the social impact of the estates' activities through the use of case studies. The (2024) report also details wider priority social impact measures and targets including numbers of visits from school children; visitor and employee satisfaction; training opportunities provided for young people; and, wellbeing of the local community, which are largely not contextualised. Similarly, the Duchy of Cornwall's (2025) impact report uses case studies and measures of activity to indicate progress in enhancing social impact, but these are also not contextualised.

Social capital can be understood as the stock of trust, strength of networks and existence of shared norms and culture within and between actors within a community (Dasgupta, 1999). Social capital is understood to be an important constituent of productive potential within communities and, alongside natural and economic capital, to underpin social wellbeing (Scrivens & Smith, 2013). In a rural estates' context, a measurement of social capital could indicate the levels of trust, goodwill and capacity to work together towards shared goals, which exist between an estate and its' stakeholders. Despite reports of interest from the rural estates sector in measuring and understanding their social capital (Barnston, 2020; RICS, 2022); there is little evidence publicly available of social capital measurement being carried out by rural estates. Perhaps this is unsurprising, within the wider social capital scholarship it is recognised that social capital is, ‘fiendishly difficult to measure,’ (Dasgupta, 1999). Within a UK context the ONS developed an evidence-based framework for measuring social capital within UK communities. The ONS framework uses predominantly 19 social capital measures, to measure what they understand to be the four key aspects of social capital: personal relationships; social network support; civic engagement; and, trust and cooperative norms (Siegler, 2014). These measures have been used to report on social capital at a national level, most recently in 2020/21 (ONS, 2021). UK Government have also published a set of harmonised social capital indicators to support comparability of social capital measurement within different contexts (Government Analysis Function, 2021). However, while the theoretical underpinnings of the social capital approach can apply across contexts, the nationally developed social capital indicators focus on the perceptions of individual citizens within their self-defined community and as such, would need to be adjusted for rural estates to measure the social capital between them, and their stakeholders. Estimates of social capital generated by estates within Biggar Economics’ (2023) report were calculated by surveying Scottish estates to identify community based activities provided by the estate and assigning a market value to these activities, a methodology the authors recognise is ‘plausible’ rather than ‘persuasive’ (Biggar Economics, 2023, p. 57). It is important to note that there is no indication that this method of measuring social capital involved measuring the perceptions of the stakeholders of the estate.

Understanding and measuring the social wellbeing – or the feelings of happiness, purpose, satisfaction and anxiety people feel within themselves and within their communities – forms an important aspect of Government understanding of how well the country is doing (HM Treasury & SITF, 2021). The UK measures our subjective understanding of social wellbeing on an individual, national and community level and reports on a range of wellbeing indicators regularly (ONS, 2025). These large scale nationally conducted wellbeing surveys, such as the ONS wellbeing dashboard, are utilised by some estates to track impact on wellbeing within the specific geographies in which the estate has influence (Scanlon, 2023). While individual perceptions of wellbeing may be difficult to attribute to a single activity or organisation, community based indicators of wellbeing – such as perceptions of what makes a community a good place to live and thrive – can be more readily attributable to activities of organisations such as rural estates in a given area (WWFW, 2017). DEFRA’s Green Book supplementary guidance from HM Treasury (2021) also provides guidance of how to attribute monetary value to improvements in subjective wellbeing measured as a result of projects or activities. The primary mechanism for this is the WELLBY, a unit of measurement of an increase in life satisfaction for one person over a year and given an average value of £13,000 (2019 price levels) (HM Treasury & SITF, 2021). Guidance is also available from organisations such as What Works for Wellbeing (2024) and Measure Up (2025) to help monetise social wellbeing impacts of organisational activity.

Social Value Measurement (SVM) is currently a popular social impact measurement tool within UK policymaking strongly aligned with social wellbeing measurement, which provides a broad approach to monetising the social impact of capital investment. SVM can draw on different methods (e.g. Social Cost Benefit Analysis; SROI) to conduct this valuation, each with their own strengths and weaknesses (Fujiwara & Dass, 2020). The National Social Value Taskforce’s (2019) SVM framework offers a consistent approach for organisations to measure and report on the social value generated by projects during Government tendering processes. The methodology underpinning the (2019) framework is the

HM Treasury's Green Book valuation methodology, using Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) and other public sector appraisal techniques to develop financial proxies which indicate the monetary value of a projects' social impacts. However, it is recognised that available financial proxies for social value generation vary in their robustness and need to be used with consideration (National Social Value Taskforce, 2019). The main outcome themes and associated financial proxies included within the TOMS framework include good quality local employment opportunities, reduction in crime, improved health outcomes, support for the local community, improved local environment and greenspace provision (National Social Value Taskforce, 2019). However, the 2019 indicator set is predominantly designed to facilitate the tendering of new contracts, and remains limited in its scope of social value indicators, with a heavy focus on local employment. Despite the methodological challenges, rural estate advisors suggest that, 'social value reporting will become an expected element of business terms,' and that rural estates should look to establish their social value baseline in order to meet this future challenge (Savills, 2024, pp. 3–4). It was difficult to find publicly available evidence that rural estates are currently engaging with social impact valuation activity. Evidence based tools have been developed to support organisations to undertake SVMs (e.g. HACT, 2025), however many of these formerly free tools are now behind paywalls.

The CLA commissioned researchers at CCRI, University of Gloucestershire to conduct an analysis of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) generated by CLA members (Courtney et al., 2024). The methodology adopted included a survey of all CLA members, as well as deeper analysis on SROI generated by four case study members. Estimates could then be made about the wider social impact of CLA members across a number of categories including:

- Access to green space and permissive access
- Education and interpretation
- Environmental management (including climate change, nature recovery, forestry and heritage)
- Community participation and provision
- Community health and social prescribing
- Housing and development
- Employment opportunities for socio-economically excluded people
- Community renewable energy and broadband

Case study areas provided detail of their investment (financial/employee time) across the categories above. Key stakeholders in each case study area were surveyed to determine the extent to which case study estates investment had resulted in a change in relevant outcomes e.g. improvements in employability, increase in health and wellbeing. Proxy financial data was identified to represent the value of each change in outcome. Deadweight, attribution and displacement values were identified against each category to ensure that SROI was not overattributed to the activities of the case study estate. Measuring case study estates' investment against the estimated value of the outcomes provided, resulted in a benefit to investment ratio (BIR) for each case study area. This represents the most thorough attempt to measure the SROI offered by the diversity of CLA's membership, however the study faced some challenges in attempting to measure such a diverse group of businesses. The response rate from the wider CLA membership was low (circa. 2%), leaving researchers to make assumptions in order to extrapolate findings across the wider cohort. And, as is true of all SROI methods of social impact measurement; Courtney et al. note that the, ‘investment, benefits and the resulting BIRs are *not* performance metrics,’ and are not comparable between estates (2024, p. 46).

2.3 The value of a rural estate project methodology

Background to the research project

This research project originated from a desire from the Clinton Devon Estates management team to understand and better measure the contribution of rural estates such as Clinton Devon Estates to local and regional economic, social and environmental outcomes. As we saw in section 2.2, at the outset of the project, we were unable to establish one clear methodology for rural estates to follow which could capture the breadth of economic, social and environmental outcomes delivered through the diverse portfolio of an estate such as Clinton Devon.

To date, Clinton Devon has undertaken significant work to understand and measure the natural capital generated within the boundaries of the Estate (see for example Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b; Holden, 2022). Work is also underway at Clinton Devon Estates to measure the scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions generated by the Estate’s activity. As a result, these methodologies were not adopted within this research project, which should be considered complementary to this existing (and ongoing) body of work.

Overview of project methodology

The aim of the research project was to evaluate systematically how the Clinton Devon Estate’s management values drive action across the Estate’s portfolio with measurable impacts for society, the environment and the economy more broadly, beyond the immediate reach of the estate’s boundaries. We explored activity across core business areas and recent projects to provide narrative, economic and social value analysis of business impacts, including harder-to-measure aspects of the Estate’s activity.

The key research objectives for the project were as follows:

- Understand the relationship between the Estate’s core values, the delivery of outcomes across its portfolio and its alignment with stakeholder values
- Understand how the Estate builds social capital with its stakeholders
- Outline the economic contribution of the Estate to the wider economy, by estimating the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated through the Estate and its tenants’ activities
- Outline the social contribution of the Estate to wider society, by measuring the Social Value generated through key, measurable activities delivered by the Estate
- Understand the difficult-to-quantify economic and social contributions generated as a result of the Estate’s values-based approach to core business and project-based activity

In order to fulfil the research objectives, a mixed methodological approach was adopted. Following an initial literature review and project scoping stage, ethical approval was sought and granted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (reference: 10735649). The research project included four main methods, including: literature review, qualitative interviews, quantitative social survey, and administrative data collection. Each method was used to inform design of subsequent methods and analysed using different techniques, including: descriptive statistical analysis, social value calculations and to inform estimates of Gross Valued Added (GVA) generated through the Estate's activity – see figure 2.1.

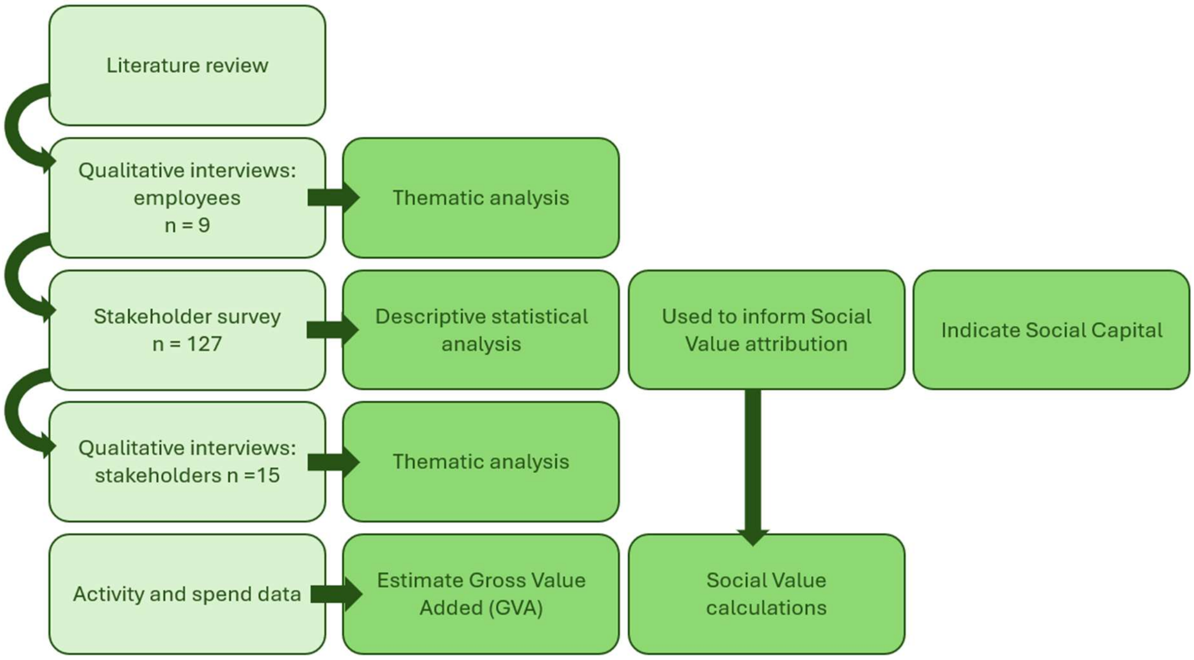

Figure 2. 1: An overview of the mixed methods and analysis techniques deployed in the Value of a Rural Estate project.

Qualitative interviews: Clinton Devon employees

In total 9 Clinton Devon employees took part in interviews. Employees were either invited to do so by the research team or volunteered to do so after taking part in the stakeholder survey.

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview topics included: understanding the work of the employee and their department; understanding how their department's activities overlapped with those of other departments; how the values of the organisation impact on delivery within the department; relationships with stakeholders; and details of specific projects or activities for which they were involved in delivery.

The recordings of these interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

Themes emerging from these interviews helped to inform the administrative data collection and the design and delivery of the stakeholder survey.

Quantitative social survey: A Value of a Rural Estate Stakeholder Survey

The online survey was designed and delivered in Qualtrics and a link to the survey was made available on the project microsite, hosted on the University of Exeter website. While, the survey was predominantly marketed as an online survey, limited paper copies were also made available in key locations within or adjacent to Estate boundaries. The survey was advertised in local media, on posterboards on the Pebblebed Heaths, on Clinton Devon Estate official communication channels and via personal mailing lists held by different departments within the Estate.

The stakeholder survey ran from 14 November 2025 until 7 January 2026. After data cleansing, there were 127 useable responses. Responses were received from a broad range of stakeholders including reasonable samples of farming tenants (~23% of total cohort), residential tenants (~6% of total cohort), commercial tenants (~5% of total cohort) and employees (~33% of total cohort).

Detailed analysis of the survey was conducted using SPSS statistics. In addition to informing descriptive statistical analysis of the dataset, the survey findings were used to inform the attribution of financial proxies as part of the Social Value calculations. The survey results were also used to estimate the social capital generated by the Estate's interactions with its stakeholders. Free text responses were also used as part of the thematic analysis.

Qualitative interviews: Clinton Devon stakeholders

Stakeholders who took part in the stakeholder survey were given the opportunity to indicate if they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview with a University of Exeter researcher. Stakeholders were also provided with the researcher's contact information to make contact directly. The project microsite hosted on the University of Exeter website also provided another opportunity for stakeholders to make contact directly.

Of those who completed the survey, 25 stakeholders indicated they would be willing to take part in the interviews. Of these, 15 stakeholders responded to the invitations and reminders and took part in interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and explored the stakeholder's relationship with the estate, how this has changed over time, the impacts of the relationship and any problems or issues, for example.

The recordings of these interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

Administrative data collection

Heads of department and other Clinton Devon Estate employees assisted with data gathering and collection for the project. Much of the target data was already gathered by the Estate, but on occasion needed re-analysing by the researcher to make it ready for the project. On a few occasions target data was not routinely gathered and employees gathered this data specifically for the project, or made a reasonable estimate based on available data. The researcher was also provided with consolidated accounts of the Estate and the Conservation group as well as Key Performance Indicator spreadsheets routinely calculated by the Estate management team. Data was collected for target years 2022 – 2025.

Types of data collected included:

- activity data (e.g. public engagement activity, incidents of flytipping, deer management activity)
- stakeholder data (e.g. anonymised data about no. of farm lets, no. of commercial lets)
- financial data (e.g. spend on local suppliers, operational spend by Clinton Devon Estates).

This data will (along with the stakeholder survey responses) form the basis of the Social Value analysis.

Economic analysis: estimating Gross Value Added (GVA)

GVA estimates the value of goods and services produced by an organisation, area or industry and is used as an important indicator of regional economic health.

Data provided by Clinton Devon Estates as part of the administrative data collection was used to estimate the GVA generated by the Estate and its associated businesses. Known data was combined with national economic datasets to estimate direct GVA.

Indirect GVA estimates were made using Welsh Government 2019 multipliers, however, these have been used to illustrate possible indirect impacts and should be interpreted cautiously.

The full detail of how these calculations were made is included at Technical Annex A.

Social value calculations

Social value represents the net value of an intervention or activity to society, encompassing both the costs and benefits to individuals and the wider costs and benefits to society. It is an established methodology that organisations can use to help understand the wider value of their activity.

The HM Treasury (2021) Green Book Wellbeing for Appraisal Supplementary Guidance provides a detailed framework for analysts to express the full costs and benefits of a project or activity in monetary terms by looking at the impact on people's wellbeing using Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) or Social Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA). This is an established Social Valuation methodology, which is used widely across Government departments, the third-sector and business. Where positive or negative externalities do not have clear market prices, these can often be monetised for appraisal purposes using Green Book valuation methods.

This social valuation approach typically uses relevant published research to establish financial proxies which can provide a valuation for the impact of the Estate's activity, where there are not otherwise market values for this activity. Several different methods can be used or combined to monetise or value these impacts on wellbeing. These include:

- stated preference methods,
- revealed preference methods,
- the wellbeing valuation approach,
- financial impact to the public purse.

While Social Value calculations are often used as part of procurement exercises to demonstrate the value of a planned intervention or project into the future (see National Social Value Taskforce, 2019), these techniques are also used by local authorities, businesses and the third-sector to provide a snapshot of the impact of their delivery.

In order to best meet the needs of this project using the Social Value framework as outlined in the Green Book, each area of activity for which Clinton Devon Estates may be generating social value was identified and scoped. Actual administrative data collected was used to inform the social value calculations made as part of this project. Appropriate published research was found which could inform the development of per person or per activity financial proxies. The findings of the stakeholder survey were used to reasonably attribute the financial proxy to the Estate's activity. Where appropriate, costs to society were also calculated and included as deductions to the overall social value generated. For ongoing areas of activity (e.g. providing greenspace access) only one year's value is reported. Where one-off activity has occurred in a year (e.g. improving energy efficiency of housing) 2023/24 and 2024/25 data was used to calculate social value generated in each year.

The full detail of how these calculations were made is included at Technical Annex B.

3. Clinton Devon Estates: values and building social capital with stakeholders

3.1 Introduction

In this Chapter we introduce Clinton Devon Estates and its stakeholders. We start by exploring the organisational structures of the Estate with key members of the management team, uncovering how the values of the organisation are codified and communicated through the Estate's governance structures. We took at the Estate's strategic priorities and values as detailed in the 2030 strategy, as well as those mentioned by employee in interviews. We take a look at how well stakeholders understand the Estate's values and how well aligned stakeholders are to the Estate's core values. Finally, we look at the ways in which Clinton Devon Estates seeks to build social capital with its stakeholders.

3.2 Overview of Clinton Devon Estates

Decision-making and the organisational structure of the Estate

Clinton Devon Estates is first and foremost a family business, led by the 23rd Baron Clinton. Members of the Clinton family work together under the leadership of Lord Clinton to oversee the Estate's operations and provide strategic direction. The family is supported by a long-serving board of trustees, led by the Chair of Trustees, who meet frequently to scrutinise the activity of the management team and guide operational decision making. The management team have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Estate as well as planning and delivery of future projects. The team is led by CEO, John Varley, who joined the Estate in 2000 from BT plc. In appointing John Varley, the Estate broke with longstanding tradition of appointing an experienced chartered surveyor into the role. Instead, the Estate moved in a new direction by appointing a leader instead from a FTSE 100 business.

In the early 2000s the core members of the family, the Estate management team and some tenant businesses took part in bespoke training at the Institute of Management Development in Switzerland, alongside other family businesses. John Varley recognised this moment as a 'sea change' in the way the Estate operated. This process of learning about the challenges and possibilities for family businesses more broadly enabled the family, trustees and management team to rethink the Estate's own organisational governance structures. John Varley on this:

"We came back from IMD and developed a family constitution, which has been in place ever since the early 2000s… regular formal family meetings with agendas, where just the family attend, before trustee meetings, to align family views on Estate direction and decisions. IMD emphasised the need to think of three elements to governance of a family business; getting clarity on what is Family, what is Ownership and what is Business – "FOB". John Varley, CEO

The Family Constitution has become a core organisational document which enshrines the values of the family and guides trustee and management decision making. As #Trustee1 notes the family constitution is not a static document, but is regularly reviewed and updated to guide decision making. #Trustee1 on this:

"The family would not mind my saying… they've become much more collectively self-aware about what they really want, how their values entrench upon the estate and the way it's run. And we have something called the Family Constitution which is very much the family's document. And which they regularly review and which they share with senior management and the trustees." #Trustee1

Management and trustees are able to consult the Family Constitution as new opportunities arise, providing clear guidance as new business ideas or project proposals are being scoped. Opportunities which don't align with the values enshrined within the constitution can be dismissed promptly, avoiding wasted efforts. However, as the constitution is a dynamic, working document there are opportunities for amendments which can account for changes in policy, new opportunities or shifts in priority. #Trustee1 on this:

"Now that isn't to say that some of what we've done over the last few years wouldn't in the past, have seemed outlandish, even unimaginable. But that's because the world changes and attitudes gradually change with it." #Trustee1

Alongside the introduction of the Family Constitution, recent decades have also seen other changes in organisational governance. As with many other estates, the trustee role has become increasingly professionalised, with trustees recognising their enhanced responsibilities to hold the management team to account and drive forward values-based decision making.

"All our trustees are professional, supporting of management and offer constructive challenge to the executive team – this is important. They all recognise their responsibilities as trustees, which can be onerous." John Varley, CEO

This evolution of the trustee role includes a greater time commitment. Previously, agreeing the annual budget and accounts could form the majority of the trustees' activity, across two meetings a year, however since the early 2000s a third meeting was added where, in John Varley's words: "we all get together and review strategy." Trustees are also involved in other departmental meetings like the Farm Partners' meeting, as well as regular video calls with John Varley and other members of the management team.

Close working relationships between the three decision making elements of the organisation – the family, the trustees and the management team – helps to support the smooth running of the organisation. Employees recognise that they are working on behalf of a family organisation and ensuring close working relationships with family and trustees is important to employees at all levels of the organisation. #Employee5 on this:

"One of the themes from the team, one of their core goals, was interaction with the family and it actually was really important with the team." #Employee5

Close working between the family, trustees and employees also facilitates the Estate to capitalise on opportunities or take bold, innovative decisions when these arise. Recalling conversations which preceded the River Otter Beaver Trial, for example, #Employee1 describes how the trustees help to weigh-up organisational decisions, balancing the opportunity against the Estate's values and the proposals drawn-up by the management team.

"I mean they were then cautious supporters but there was no good reason for them not to do it… their job is to trust that the people tasked with managing the Estate to come up with the good decisions and especially very rare that they go, now this is just a terrible idea." #Employee1

Similarly, from the trustee perspective, they recognise their role in supporting the management team and their employee to achieve on behalf of the Estate. #Trustee1 on this:

"Obviously we're parties to big decisions, but it's the people on the ground who both do most of the work and achieve most of what's achieved… they're the ones at the at the fuzzy end of the lollipop when dealing with difficult stakeholders or things are going less well. So you know, one part of our job is to support them." #Trustee1

The formation of the Estate's 2021 strategy in 2011 also marked a significant change in the Estate's approach to agenda setting across the different levels of the organisation. For John Varley, introducing the first ever formal published strategy for the Estate was a critical step in the Estate's professionalisation.

It was important that the strategy for the Estate re-focused attention on its core operations and delivering these to an exceptional standard.

"And so the point was to refocusing on our core purpose and what we do well, which is managing property and land… to provide facilities and land for others to make a living and grow a business or add value. If you go back in history, … that's what estates always did." John Varley, CEO

The family, trustees, management and employee were all involved in the formation of the 2021 strategy and the 2030 strategy which followed. The 2030 strategy takes a forward look to the outcomes the organisation hopes to achieve over the decade, including: financial sustainability; environmental sustainability and creating an inclusive, innovative and healthy workplace. The 2030 strategy outlines the Estate's key values of stewardship and integrity, and outlines the delivery plan to take the Estate to its 2030 goals.

The Estate, which has undergone significant change and consolidation over the last 20 years, is also on the cusp of another era marked by a series of extraordinary changes. The death of the 22nd Baron Gerard, Lord Clinton in 2024 and the passing of the barony to his son Charles, Lord Clinton is a significant and enduring change for the family and the management of the Estate. But as #Employee6 notes, other impending changes within the management team and the board of trustees mean that the team is conscious of the managing the impact of these organisational changes into the future.

"… so there's a big shift in the family in terms of roles and responsibility and their own grief. There's some organisational grief… We've had changes within the board of trustees … And then obviously, [senior members of the management team] are at a point in time where they will retire at a similar point in time. So within this tripartite structure of management that you've got, you've got this quite significant changes in each leg within a sort of five year period. [We're working to] make sure that everyone's ready for those changes [and]… we manage that change as smoothly as possible." #Employee6

3.3 The core values of Clinton Devon Estates

Clinton Devon Estates values

As we saw in section 3.2, the values of the Estate flow from the family, via the Family Constitution and are upheld by the trustees, the management team and Clinton Devon employee. Within the 2030 strategy these values were summarised as: *stewardship* – doing today what is right for tomorrow; and *integrity* – standing up for their beliefs, doing the right thing consistently, communicating honestly.

Employees interviewed for this project were able to expand on these values and relate them to particular areas of the Estate's activity. Employees were consistent in how they described the Estate's values, how they related this to the steer they received from the family, but also how they understood these values in the context of financial viability. #Employee4, #Employee5 and #Employee2 on this:

"… in drawing up the estate strategy the family… have been historically, and still are I think, very clear on their own values … Very much about doing what's right for communities from environment to agriculture and forestry. Quite clear drivers though that we must make it pay, it's got to wash its face." #Employee4

"The strap line is doing today what's right for tomorrow… that is the overall focus. We're not massively commercially driven like some of our neighbours… What the Estate's looking for is sustainable repeatable income, responsible asset management … and it's about supporting local communities in local events. It's about supporting our tenants and providing them with information. It's about sustainability. It's about thinking about the future and fundamentally, it's a family business. You know, there's a family at the heart of it." #Employee5

"[It's] responsible stewardship of the land and the Estate's resources. And the local community, the people that live and work on the estate. I do believe that throughout the departments there is a genuine care and assumption towards that… and the family. But of course that does have to fit within the constraints of a financially viable business." #Employee2

Employees and trustees interviewed were clear that delivering sustainable, repeatable income for the Estate within the context of the values is an ongoing balancing act. #Employee6 points out how the values of the Estate guide decision making, with each opportunity for financial return balanced against the long-term benefit to the local area and reputational impacts for the Estate.

"There are places with many projects where we maybe could have a higher rate of return and we choose not to because we want to have greater value in the legacy. And create a better environment for society. And be an exemplar of doing things well. And I think that comes back to how important those values are around that balance between running a project commercially enough that it works whilst also meeting those society benefits." #Employee6

Balancing the values of stewardship and integrity against generating sustainable repeatable income can mean that the Estate is not maximising the income generation opportunities which it could be pursuing. However, as #Trustee1 explains, for the Estate to survive in the long-term traditional values such as stewardship must be stretched and redefined.

"But it's to do with wishing to be good stewards … the family has strong views, which the trustees need to be aware of … core areas which the character of which should be preserved… usually in taking that view, they'll be entirely on the same page as the people who live there, of course… even if there can sometimes be a cost in respecting tradition." #Trustee1

Values and stakeholders

As part of the Stakeholder Survey, we asked all respondents a set of questions about what they understood to be the core values of Clinton Devon Estate. Included within the possible options were the values of the Estate as defined in the 2030 strategy: stewardship and integrity. Alongside these stated values, five additional possible values were included which arose from preliminary interviews with Clinton Devon Estates employees. These additional values included: sustainability; care for the local community; thriving rural economy; contributing to knowledge; and generating income. An overview of stakeholder responses to these questions is included at figure 3.1.

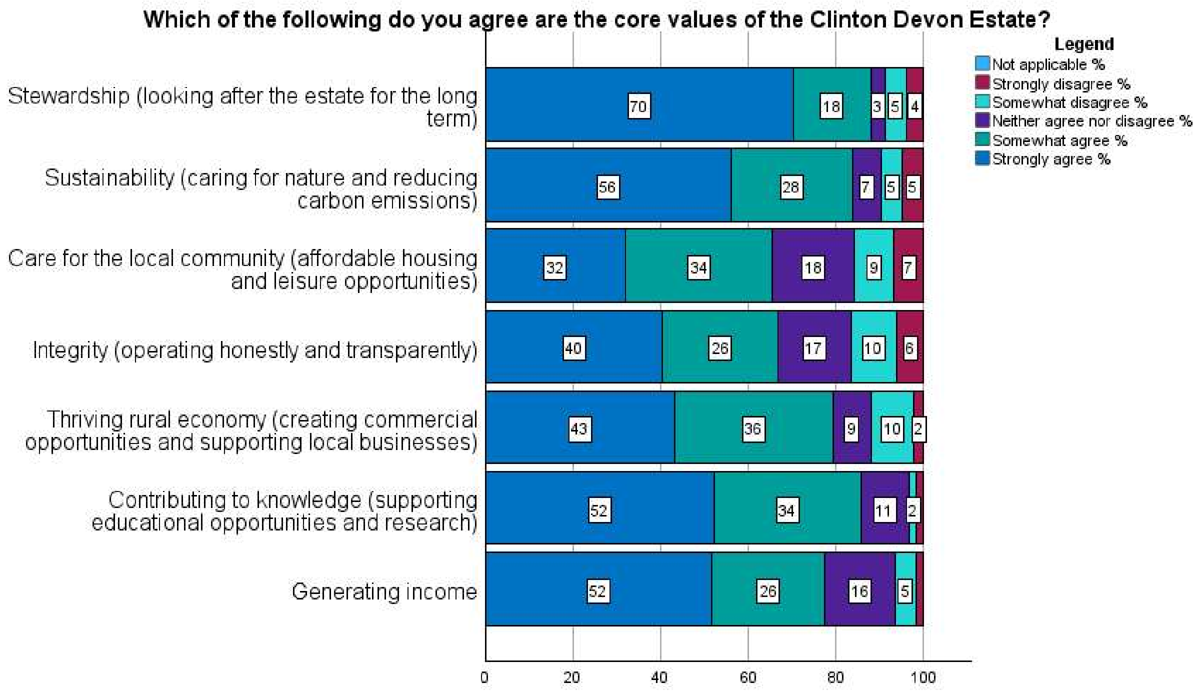

Figure 3. 1: stakeholder responses, core values of Clinton Devon Estates, percentage agree/disagree

Stakeholders also had the opportunity to provide a free text response to describe the value(s) they understood to be core to Clinton Devon Estates. These free text responses can be summarised as: thought leadership (in estate management, sustainable food production); providing public access to greenspace; and placemaking.

We also asked all respondents to the Stakeholder Survey which of the same set of values was most important to them or their organisation. A summary of responses to these statements is included at figure 3.2.

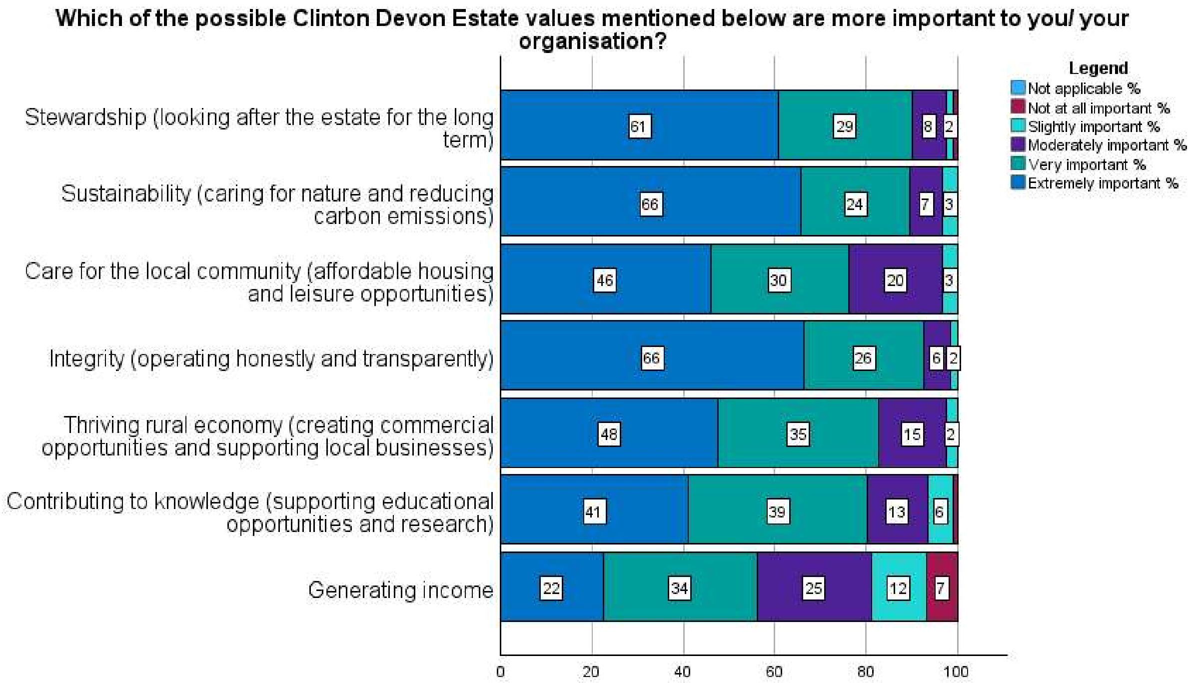

Figure 3. 2: stakeholder responses, importance of values to stakeholders, percentage important/not important

Conducting an analysis of directional difference allows us to understand the extent to which stakeholder understanding of the core values of Clinton Devon Estates differs from the importance they place on these values. As table 3.1 demonstrates, directional difference analysis suggests that stakeholders see values such as generating income and contributing to knowledge as more important to Clinton Devon than to themselves. Conversely, stakeholders see values such as care for the local community and integrity as more important to themselves than to Clinton Devon.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Generating income	-0.5946	111	1.36434
Contributing to knowledge	-0.2000	115	0.98408
Stewardship	0.0513	117	1.25152
Thriving rural economy	0.2149	121	1.21933
Sustainability	0.3109	119	1.25379
Care for the local community	0.4569	116	1.42275
Integrity	0.7190	121	1.39775

Table 3. 1: Directional difference between stakeholders perception of Clinton Devon Estate values and values of importance to stakeholders/stakeholder organisations

Figure 3.3 illustrates the relationship between these values based questions in more depth. The values of sustainability and stewardship show strong alignment between stakeholder perceptions of Clinton Devon Estates' values and the importance of these to their own organisations. Thriving rural economy also shows a relatively strong alignment across stakeholder responses. More information about the Stakeholder Survey and analysis of the results can be found in Chapter 2.

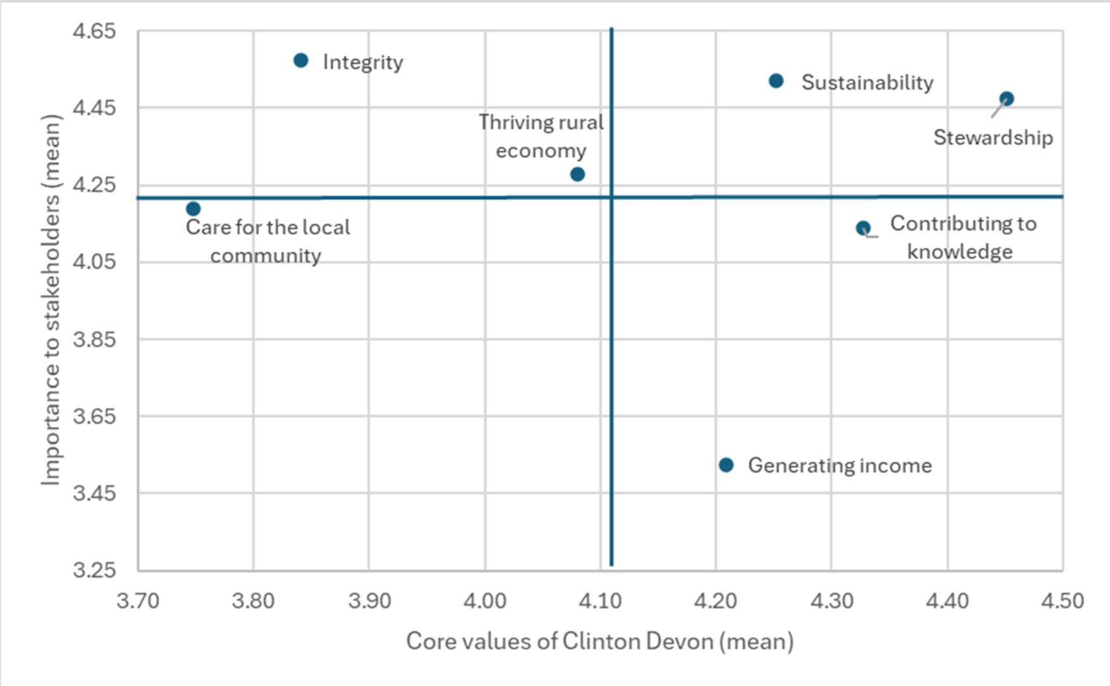

Figure 3. 3: quadrant representation – core values of Clinton Devon Estate (mean) against importance of values to stakeholders (mean)

Interviews with stakeholders provided an opportunity to explore stakeholder understanding of the values of Clinton Devon Estates in more depth. Stakeholders were most likely to refer to sustainability and stewardship as the Estate's key values. For stakeholders, these values were closely linked and expressed by the Estate through their actions to restore nature, for example in the Pebblebed Heaths or the Lower Otter Valley. The comments of #StrategicPartner4, are illustrative of this:

"They're very much thinking of the long term. And how to address climate crisis, which is a really intelligent thing to do. And I think they think a lot about biodiversity and the health of the heathland, which obviously could deteriorate quite easily unless one manages it properly." #StrategicPartner4

However, this perception was not limited to stakeholders whose involvement with the Estate was linked to nature restoration projects or the work of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust. #StrategicPartner1, who works with the Estate on commercial and residential developments also described how the Estate's values influenced their approach to development projects. Although #StrategicPartner1 mentions stewardship explicitly as a value guiding the Estate through the planning process and on to completed development projects, implicit in #StrategicPartner1's description is the Estate's value of integrity.

"They deal with things like landscape, deal with ecological solutions, they accept that it's a necessary hassle in the planning process, but also something that they view as important to do in terms of stewardship. [They] don't do stuff just because it's needed to get planning permission, but also because I think they think it's the right thing to do. So yeah, I think generally I would say that their stuff is really good practice, really good practice." #StrategicPartner1

Other stakeholders also implicitly touched on the Estate's values by pointing to the management of the organisation. Here #Community9 recognises a role for the Estate as a thought leader, but also links this implicitly to the value of integrity, here applied to the internal workings of the Estate and the commitment to its employee.

"… so it is a nationally significant organisation in the rural affairs world and agriculture and so on. So that's one thing. And I think the other thing is … there's a lot in common with other largeish medium sized family firms question, you know, issues around the relationship between the professional management and the family… I mean it's amazing that that the Estate has had the same chief exec for nearly 30 years now… exceptional and … I'm aware of a lot of good things. There may be some downsides to that. And there usually are, but I'm not aware of them. It seems to me that that that this continuity of leadership has been very productive." #Community9

3.4 Building relationships with stakeholders

Clinton Devon Estates and stakeholder relationships

Stakeholders with long standing relationships with the Estate could contrast the experience of working with the Estate under a more traditional management style, compared to their contemporary relationship with the Estate. #Community2 describes the historic traditional stakeholder-Estate relationship as distant, with preconceptions on both sides.

"When I first came here, it was Clinton Devon Estates managed in a very traditional sort of way… it was very much Clinton Devon Estates is an old school landowner… some of [the community] were very derogatory about Clinton Devon Estates. There's a bit of inverted snobbery… they do what they want and they're very powerful and they don't take much heed of the local community and [those were] quite embedded views …" #Community2

#Community2 describes the stakeholder-Estate relationships changing in the period since John Varley was appointed. Both key stakeholders and the Estate worked to foster closer working relationships.

"…I worked hard at that time to create much greater partnership between ourselves, the District Council, the County Council and bodies like the Clinton Devon Estates. And then I think it changed when John Varley came in and he … came in with very, very hard headed business ways of looking at things … and really looking at a strategic view of the whole Estate and [it] changed it considerably and it became a much more wider looking estate and that recognised the need for partnerships and community working, but also to make the ownership profitable." #Community2

From the Estate's perspective, this signified a conscious change in strategic approach. John Varley describes traditional relationships between the Estate and wider society as part of a 'fortress mentality' where the drive to preserve autonomy and independence can have unintended negative consequences for the survival of estates more broadly. Instead, John Varley talks about Clinton Devon Estates increasingly adopting a 'federated' approach to operating with wider society. John Varley on this:

"… In a fortress mindset, family control can harden into defensiveness, protecting autonomy, resisting partnership, confusing longevity with resilience. History gives us plenty of examples of that failing. But in a federated model, family ownership can become something very different. It can provide the governance architecture for patience, long payback horizons, shared risk and collaboration across generations rather than reporting cycles. It doesn't make federation inevitable, but it does make it possible." John Varley, CEO

Taking a federated approach for John and the team at Clinton Devon Estates involves building partnerships with stakeholders who are not necessarily the traditional allies of rural estates. While Clinton Devon maintains strong ties with other Estates and representative bodies, new partnerships have included public access representative bodies, local community advocacy groups and others.

"…But now it's becoming really important that that's what we do and not just federations with other estates, like with the CLA or the NFU, like-minded bodies against the world. You've got to federate with the National Trust, you've got to federate with the Wildlife Trust, you've got to federate with a Labour government. You've got to federate with local communities and others." John Varley, CEO

This federated approach is also applied when building relationships with contractors and suppliers. Long standing relationships with specific suppliers are valued and nurtured, particularly for complex work, but #Employee4 points out that the Estate also looks to bring in others to build new relationships and access fresh insights.

"It's about having a great network of people and using the right people for the right job. We started to widen our suppliers a little bit. So we tested on a couple of smaller projects using other providers … because people come with a fresh outlook and different ways of working but it's always good to work with people who know you and understand the complexity of our organisation it can make it more efficient." #Employee4

Building social capital with stakeholders

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provides a framework for measuring social capital in order to understand more about community involvement and cohesion within a given context, as well as provide added insight into how to facilitate closer community ties. Chapter 2 – methodology contains a more detailed discussion of social capital measurement.

Respondents to the Stakeholder Survey were asked how far they agreed with a series of statements which related to different aspects of social capital building, including: trust and cooperation, support with social networks and civic engagement. Figure 3.5 summarises stakeholder responses to these statements.

As figure 3.4 demonstrates, stakeholders particularly value the interpersonal relationships they have with members of the Clinton Devon Estates team. Stakeholders also trust Clinton Devon Estates as an organisation. Stakeholders were more undecided about opportunities to engage with Clinton Devon Estates and for the Estate to feedback.

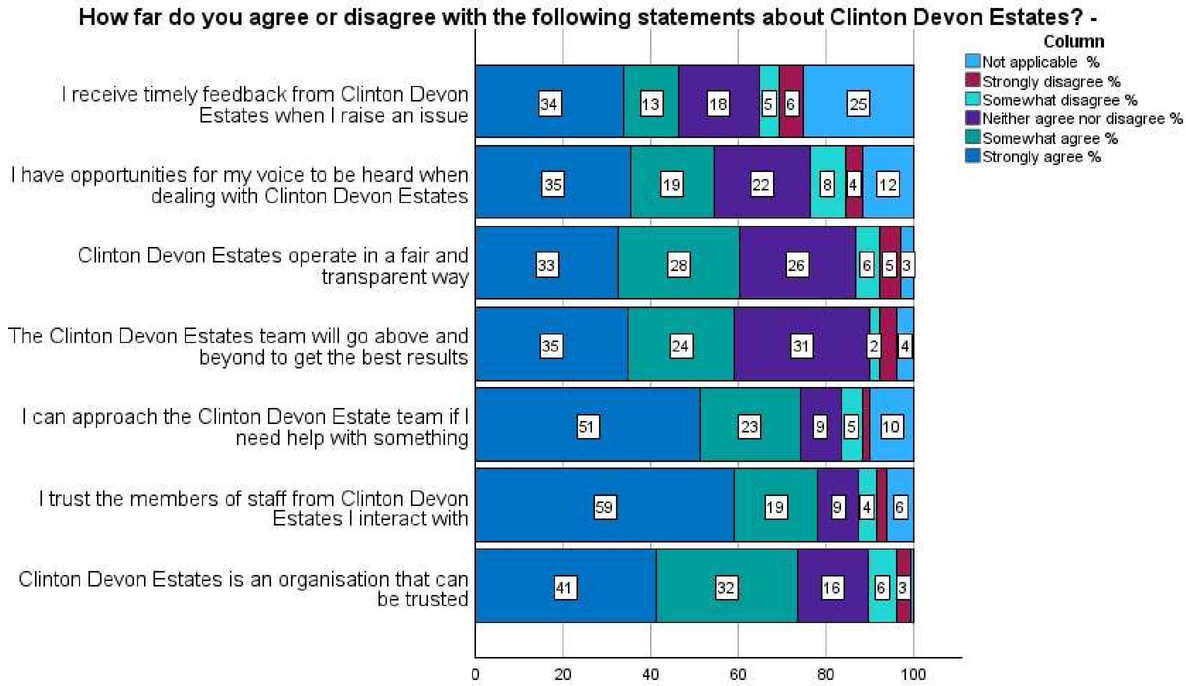

Figure 3. 4: stakeholder responses, trust, engagement and social network related statements, percentage agree/disagree

In building social capital with its stakeholders, Clinton Devon Estates has adopted a number of different overt and subtle approaches, depending on the stakeholder group and the strength of their ties to the organisation (see Chapters 4 and 6 for the experiences of farming, commercial and residential tenants).

In an example of overt relationship building, the Estate has not shied away from developing partnerships with stakeholders who are not traditional allies. #Employee1 and #Community6 described the way in which the Estate worked with a local community group to fundamentally change the nature of the relationship. As #Community6 notes, while the relationship used to be adversarial, the Estate worked to include this group in nature recovery projects and ongoing citizen science programmes. For this stakeholder, engagement in projects, building trust and consistent openness were important for the development of this relationship. #Community6 on this:

"And [organisation] has always had a love-hate relationship with Clinton Devon Estates. And I think for people who have been around for many years, The [organisation] has objected to many things that the Clinton Devon Estates have done in the past, and there has been a bit of a friction between the two organisations. I think that is far less so now, and I would say it's almost disappeared... And if you talk to the employees of Clinton Devon Estates, I think that they would all agree that the

relationship with the [organisation] now is a very positive, engaging relationship, which may not have been the case five or six years ago." #Community6

However, as we will see in Chapter 5 – Placeshaping, building this enhanced relationship with #Community6's organisation does not mean that this organisation is unconditionally supportive of all the Estate's plans for balancing nature, sustainable production and development within the Estate boundaries. As a relatively new stakeholder relationship, which brings together many disparate voices, the support the Estate receives from this stakeholder should still be considered as more tenuous and conditional than some of its other stakeholders.

#StrategicPartner4 is another non-traditional ally where the Estate has proactively worked to build the relationship over time. #StrategicPartner4 works to promote access to greenspace for the public and describes the perceptions which Clinton Devon Estates needed to overcome in order to build that relationship.

"I'm suspicious of [other large estates]... I don't trust them until they prove that they can be trusted. I start [with] my default position is don't trust them. They're not very public spirited. They're in it for themselves... They have to prove themselves. I'm not going to take it that they are like Clinton Devon unless they prove it." #StrategicPartner4

When pressed as to what made Clinton Devon Estates an organisation that can be trusted, #StrategicPartner4 pointed to the willingness of the Estate to enter into dialogue and act on advice.

"[They are] an Estate that's prepared to listen and you know even do things. So we're kind of pushing at an open door and that's very satisfying. #StrategicPartner4

#StrategicPartner1 and #StrategicPartner2 both referred to a more subtle and ongoing strategy in which the Estate build relationships with stakeholders, by hosting project partners within the Estate office. Co-locating with strategic partners allows employees to form close working relationships with stakeholders in different organisations and demonstrates the Estate's openness to their project partners.

"Well, every Friday morning for about 8 or 9 years, I used to work directly out of the estate, dealing with sort of day-to-day stuff for them. So I got to know them very well and that obviously that helps that and helps that personal relationship, which is really, really helpful for me and hopefully helpful for them. So [I] know where they are coming from." #StrategicPartner1

Stakeholder relationships crystallised in this way were enduring and able to withstand changes in job role or organisation.

Neighbouring organisations and landowners constitute a group of stakeholders for which the Estate, and the employees at the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust in particular, have ongoing day-to-day relationships. Investment in these relationships can bring positive impacts at all levels of these organisations, including with volunteers who work with neighbouring organisations. #Community2, who volunteers with a neighbouring organisation, describes how day-to-day collaborations between neighbouring landowners has helped to build trust and social capital across these organisations.

"If there's a fire, for example, on the heath... they'll work together and if ponies escape or something like that... Then all the organisations, they'll come together very quickly and support each other, you know, and make sure we round up the ponies, get them back on site and get the repairs done. So there's a lot of cooperation." #Community2

More formally the Estate has helped to form stakeholder relationships with partners through engaging extensively with formal partnership boards (see also Chapter 7 – knowledge generation). #StrategicPartner6 described how Clinton Devon Estates are a critically important partner within their project board. The Estate's membership of this board has invited some criticism from the wider community, however #StrategicPartner6 are firm that the Estate approaches partnership working with integrity and openness.

"Whenever, unpopular planning proposals have come forward, there's been the perception among certain members of the public that Clinton Devon are using their status as a partner ... to put forward planning proposals ... and they don't do that. There's never any pre-conversation about anything. There's never any kind of using us as a sounding board. To basically get something pushed through, which is a good thing because it maintains that objectivity ... but it doesn't stop that public perception element." #StrategicPartner6

Other strategic partners agreed that Clinton Devon Estates made every effort to operate with openness and integrity. At times, this has meant Clinton Devon Estates confronting difficult opinions about their activities, which #StrategicPartner5 did not attempt to avoid or obscure.

"You've a mandate to be objective ... [Researcher] has made some conclusions that were perhaps a little bit uncomfortable for the estate. they've taken them for what they are, not our opinions, but our objective summary of what everyone else thinks... they haven't taken them and tried to... dilute them... or sweep them under the carpet or redact them or anything more draconian." #StrategicPartner5

Regular leisure visitors to the Estate and Friends of the Commons form a more arms-length relationship with the Estate. Nonetheless, many took part in the stakeholder survey, and a subset took part in interviews. Regular leisure visitors were positive about the ways in which the Estate and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust were able to build relationships with them, pointing to signage, the Friends of the Common mailing list, car parking for Friends of the Common members and conversations with employees on the Heaths, for example. As #Community4 points out, building social capital with this group can result in building community support for the Estate with regular leisure visitors advocating on the Estate's behalf. #Community4 described how they chat to other dog walkers and leisure visitors and take the time to pass on the conservation knowledge they have gained from interacting with the Estate and the Trust.

"From their perspective, from Clinton Devon's perspective, I think they will find that I'm an advocate. So like I said, with the grumblers, I'll always try and talk the grumblers round. So I'll always try to pass on a positive message about the work that's being undertaken." #Community4

While stakeholders taking part in interviews were overwhelming positive about their experiences working with the Estate, some stakeholders pointed to areas where they felt the Estate could improve their approach to working with stakeholders. Constructive feedback from stakeholders includes wishes for the Estate to be: clear about relationship between Clinton Devon Estates and Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust; send appropriate representation to partnership meetings (delivery/strategy/project-based as appropriate); make space for a wide range of stakeholders to help drive forward the Estate's agenda; and, empathetic towards the experiences of, efforts made by and constraints faced by partners.

4. Sustainable rural economy and rural employment

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 – Clinton Devon Estates, we discussed the Estate's strategic priorities for the medium term; the organisational values and how these influence decision making within the organisation; and the Estate's approach to building social capital with its stakeholders. In this Chapter, we explore the Estate's strategic approach to creating economic opportunities and economic value creation more specifically, either within its in-hand business portfolio or via its relationships with tenants, suppliers and contractors. The views and experiences of these stakeholders including commercial and farming tenants, contractors and employees are explored and contrasted against the strategic goals of the Estate. We estimate the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the Estates' direct operations, spending with suppliers and by the Estate's tenant and other businesses operating within the boundaries of the Estate. We also look at the social value generated by the provision of employment and training opportunities either directly with Clinton Devon Estates, or with tenant and other businesses operating within the boundaries of the Estate.

4.2 Clinton Devon Estates core operations: a strategic overview

Historic approach to creating economic opportunities on the Estate

Throughout the known history of the Estate, income generating activities have consistently centred around forestry and agricultural activities. However, over the last 20 years the economic strategy on the Estate has transformed from one in which the Estate managed numerous in-hand businesses, towards a more targeted approach to direct operations. In the past, the Estate had pursued a range of diversification activities which sought to add value to the more traditional farming and forestry enterprises. A review of these in-hand businesses in the early 2000s suggested that these enterprises, although delivering in terms of employment opportunities, were producing little by way of profit. A strategic decision was taken to focus on a core set of in-hand activities focused broadly around property and land management. CEO John Varley, explains:

"So from an operational perspective, I was there to run these businesses. And we had no common purpose. And so there was no clarity of purpose across the estate. If anything, if there was a clarity of purpose, it was diversification is king. But in diversifying, we spread all our energy, our capacity. And the one thing we weren't doing well was managing property well with the resources that we had." John Varley, CEO

Retaining the benefits of these diversification enterprises as they were sold by the Estate in the early 2000s was a priority for the family and the Estate management team; a process John Varley referred to as "exiting well." Many of these businesses became commercial tenants, retaining a – albeit altered – relationship with the Estate.

"…we sold it to him for a pound. And he became a tenant and it's thriving today. It's the best thing that ever happened. His mental health, he was really stressed about losing money. He's now making

loads of money. He's got a good brand… We helped him with the … rebranding and gave him some marketing support." John Varley, CEO

While in-hand forestry and farming operations remain important pillars of the Estate's portfolio, the portfolio also includes tenant farming, commercial and residential lettings as well as energy and property development projects. The management team of the Estate are able to clearly articulate how different elements of the Estate portfolio reflect and enact the values of the Estate. The forestry, in-hand and tenanted farming and residential lettings are understood to make a low return on investment, yet are key to delivering the Estate's commitment to stewardship and contribution to placeshaping, as #Employee6 explains:

"You know what this part of our organisation, the return, is really low, but that's OK. It washes its face. It's part of who we are and what we are. We're not going to begin to treat that differently. To make a greater return. We're just really happy that those houses, that farmland and those assets don't cost us anything. We keep them well maintained. They give people somewhere to live, land to be farmed, and that's how it works." #Employee6

In contrast, the commercial lettings portfolio, energy generation and storage projects and other commercial development projects are able to realise a greater return on investment and help support activities in other parts of the business.

"You've got a different part of the business over here that's really winding that handle and that's seeing opportunities in energy and commercial development opportunities in commercial investment, [it's] still land based and interesting and … related to what we do. But not on our doorstep. Not necessarily us doing it. It's us investing in other people doing it." #Employee6

Direct operations: sustainable farming and forestry

The Estate 2030 Strategy outlines the ambitions for sustainable forestry operations on the Estate, which aim to 'provide economic, social and environmental benefits for present and future generations,' (Clinton Devon, 2020). The management team outlined how the Estate is pursuing a continuous cover silvicultural model across the forestry portfolio in order to increase resilience and biodiversity value.

"So we're transitioning our silviculture away from a clear fell and restock model, which in the UK you could say it's the traditional model and to a continuous cover approach and particularly irregular forest management which is managing the forest in a way where it still produces as much timber, but that timber is higher quality and the forest looks much more like a natural forest with a more diverse species composition and an irregular structure, so small and big trees existing in the stand together." #Employee2

Continuous cover and irregular harvesting will enable the growth and harvesting of higher-grade timber saw log, which not only offers benefits in terms of price but may also result in products which lock up carbon for longer, if used in construction, for example. #Employee2 points out that current carbon accounting methodologies for woodland are unable to recognise the impact of the quality and final use of the end products from forestry operations.

The Estate has committed to significant investment in rangers in both North and East Devon to help manage deer numbers. #Employee2 points out how critical deer management is to support tree planting efforts on the Estate, with 70,000 trees scheduled to be planted across the Estate in the winter of 2025 and other areas designated for natural regeneration.

"And that is such an essential resource for land management and there is a willingness here to make that investment ... don't know about a luxury. It's a sensible thing to do. And arguably essential, but you know, nevertheless, it's a big investment to have made. #Employee2

There is high demand for the venison from deer management activities on the Estate, which is processed and sold directly in local markets. However, deer management remains challenging along Estate boundaries where deer may travel onto the Estate from neighbouring land.

"The herding species, which you know potentially are knocking on our door and also in North Devon, we've got you know lots of red and fallow - exactly that problem. Our neighbours next door are doing nothing. I could take you to somewhere today and look over the valley and there's almost 200 red deer lying there [on] the border." #Employee8

The Estate is exploring drone technology with infra-red cameras to understand more about the deer population both within and outside the boundaries of the Estate. However, the challenges posed by managing cross-boundary deer populations may require the Estate to take a leadership role in coordinating a place-based response to managing deer browsing pressure and its impacts on young trees and arable crops.

Within the Clinton Devon Estates 2030 Strategy, farming both directly and in partnership with tenants and stakeholders, aims to deliver food products, enhanced soils and natural environments and resilient livelihoods for agricultural workers. For the management team, the Estate's strategic approach to sustainable farming practice relies on balancing the need for financial sustainability with an understanding what the most environmentally sustainable choice will be for the local context. #Employee5 explains this balance:

"And if we want to make money quickly and easily, we can grow significant areas of maize and send it into an AD plant up the road, which is what some of our neighbours do. It's quite profitable, it's easy and it's low financial risk. Then we have digestate back from the site and get [it] back into the land. Now that creates lots of [potential] environmental risk which needs to be managed, So whilst I'm scrutinised and challenged to make money, it's within the confines of sustainable and responsible land management, not purely to maximise income. #Employee5

Recently the decision was taken by the Estate to move away from organic production. While organic farming was a good fit with the Estate's values, the price of organic milk led the management team to explore a variety of options and present these to trustees for consideration. The decision was taken to move to conventional production, but retaining sustainable practices where possible. #Employee5 explains:

"It's not about jumping from one ship to another. It's about taking the principles that we've learned from organic farming and using them, but having the option to use artificial fertilisers and ag chems

as and where we need to and to use them responsibly to enhance our product and increase profitability. That was a challenge and it continues to be a challenge … It enables us to farm more regeneratively. For example, as an organic farm our primary cultivation technique was ploughing and there are lots of reasons why we shouldn't be ploughing so much or at all." #Employee5

Following the transition to regenerative farming, the Estate has been awarded a contract to supply milk to M&S. For this buyer, the ability of the Estate to demonstrate its values of environmental stewardship and its actions on sustainability were important considerations in awarding the contract. The Estate was able to demonstrate action to monitor biodiversity and report against other Key Performance Indicators already, actions that can be challenging for smaller dairy operations.

"We've recently been awarded a Marks and Spencer's milk supply contract. And that's great from the Estate's perspective. It's good because Marks and Spencer is seen as a quality brand, a sustainable brand… But vice versa, I think M&S view, the Estate as an organisation that they want to partner with they've seen our environmental credentials. They can see how we operate, and I think that we're a brand that they want to be associated with as well. So, it works both ways." #Employee5

However #Employee5 also noted that for other outputs from the in-hand farming operations the Estate, like other farming enterprises, sold cereals into national supply chains and were not able to exert influence over the final destination of those crops or capture added value from the Clinton brand within this supply chain.

Supporting tenant enterprises

The Estate is conscious of the changing relationship between the Estate and its tenant farmers. Where traditionally, tenant farmers may have felt quite independent from the Estate, with only occasional check-ins from the Estate's land agents, the team supporting the tenant farming portfolio has been increased and is now deepening and strengthening those relationships. #Employee5 on this:

"Building a stronger relationship with our tenant farmers… whereby actually, it's Clinton Devon Estate's own farmers talking to our tenant farmers about farming, alongside the more traditional landlord/tenant conversations, just to try and change the dynamic of the relationship a little bit, which I think in the main has been successful." #Employee5

Increasingly the Estate is asking tenant farmers to work more collaboratively and more in partnership with the Estate to deliver nature restoration projects such as the Lower Otter River Valley Partnership and Heaths to Sea. While these projects can have significant financial benefits for Estate farm tenants, the management team recognise they can also put significant additional demands on the Estate's tenant farmers. Chapter 7 – Knowledge Generation discusses in more depth the way in which the Estate tries to weigh up the costs and benefits to the farm tenants of taking part in nature restoration projects or wider knowledge generation activities.

The management team are also conscious of the importance of the web of relationships within and beyond the commercial premises let by the Estate.

"… [and] one of my main roles is to generate income for the Estate, but at the same time intrinsically, there's that linkage with the sort of social cohesion, the fact that someone who's a tenant of a property down the road is probably related to somebody else who works on the farm and there's that mesh of businesses and lives that that also have to take into consideration." #Employee7

To provide an example, employees recalled a recent incident where a fire caused significant damage at a commercial premises. Employees attended the scene from the early hours of the morning to help and offer support to the tenant. #Employee7 noted the close ties between the Estate, the wider community and the tenant, with relatives of Estate employees working for the tenant, for example. They went on to say:

"So they're not just a line on a spreadsheet. They're people. And I think that's recognised at all levels." #Employee7

The Estate provided support to the tenant to assess the damage, make the building safe and develop a plan for remedial works, including the appointment of an architect, submitting a planning application (listed building consent), tendering for works, and project management. Estate employees offered support with the tenant's business continuity plan helping to install a field kitchen and marquee on the car park. The Estate also provided significant financial support. Plans are underway to support the tenant with ongoing development plans which will help to future-proof the business, providing more capacity and resilience going forward.

Maintaining a good working relationship with tenants and knowing the needs of their businesses enables the Estate team to support tenant business growth. This can include creative solutions to tenant needs, as in the example provided by #Employee7:

"[One tenant was] really short on storage space and we had a unit next door that was used for estate storage, which I thought was underutilised … we ended up reconfiguring that property so we reduced our space… and allowed her business to expand … So her business could grow. She didn't relocate somewhere else and she lived just down the road. Was ideal for her and that kind of worked all round." #Employee7

Rent-free periods were put in place during Covid-19 to support tenants through the disruption helping to support tenant business resilience during a time of uncertainty. #Employee7 comments that the rent relief helped to maintain strong occupancy during the pandemic and afterwards.

"I've had subsequent conversations with tenants who've been really grateful for the support they had from the estate during [Covid]… I suppose what was amazing actually was how few businesses sort of folded and disappeared … amazing, actually that the we've managed to keep very high occupancy levels." #Employee7

The management team at the Estate also reflected on how the pandemic and hybrid working patterns had shifted commercial priorities in terms of office space, with office quality and location becoming more critical. In response, to both this and the wider national decarbonisation agenda, the Estate are continuing to refit and remodel commercial premises as they become vacant to meet the energy efficiency expectations of both tenants and regulators and appeal to market demand for high-quality, modern workspaces. This includes venturing into new partnerships in order to deliver serviced offices – office spaces where different companies or contractors can rent per-desk under short-term, flexible contracts – which is a more sought after office model for businesses deploying post-Covid hybrid working patterns.

Managing conflicts of interest between tenant autonomy and Estate values

There were times when the management team recognised that there was potential for stakeholder values to be in conflict with those held by the Estate. The commercial lettings portfolio supports a wide range of businesses, from SMEs to large national and multinational companies. However, where a company whose ethics or reputation might be under wider societal scrutiny would seek to let a premises from the Estate, the family in particular are keen that the management team carry out due diligence checks to ensure the letting would be a good fit for the Estate and the local area. In the case of one multinational company who hoped to let a premises from the Estate, the Estate asked the prospective company to submit thorough evidence on their supply chain, for example.

“We had to prepare a business case to the trustees… but 50% of it was appendices which no other business case would have. In terms of the ethics, the supply chain, which was really ahead of its time, 2002, where [this national business] were not ready for these questions, and society wasn't, and this was the estate [driving this].” John Varley, CEO

The Estate’s commitment to environmentally-sensitive farming practice has the potential to be at odds with farming systems and practices adopted by tenant farmers on the Estate. Tenant farms rarely become available to re-let and many of the Estate’s farm tenants have taken on a tenancy previously held by their parents and grandparents. While the management team valued these long-standing relationships, this longevity means there is little opportunity for the Estate to revise terms and conditions within tenancy agreements to reflect changing priorities around best practice or the changing national policy context, for example. The Estate re-negotiates the parameters of acceptable tenant farming on Estate farms through a regularly revised policy for the tenant farms. One example of area where the Estate has directed farming practice on tenant farms is the prohibition of the use of (largely maize-derived) digestate as a soil improver.

“But it also has a knock on effect of our tenants because again for example, you know we for lots of reasons we don't allow certain types of digestate and sewage sludge onto tenant farms, however we have relaxed our rules around the use of digestate from AD plants fed only with forage and manure products to reflect changes in production methods. So that mindset is transferred onto our tenants. But we also give them the freedom to manage their land, we don't try and tell them how to farm, but there are certain conditions they have to aspire to and we see that as our way of being responsible.” #Employee5

The Estate, recognising the environmental challenges posed the impact of maize production on soils vulnerable to erosion, are pursuing research collaborations and knowledge exchange events to support tenant farmers on the Estate to manage the risks associated with maize production. However, this remains a challenging area for the Estate to balance the autonomy of tenant farmers, the Estate’s long-term stewardship of the land and wider systemic drivers incentivising maize production and the operation of anaerobic digestors in the local area. The management team at the Estate remain open to exploring options such as Environment-Business Tenancies to better support environmental stewardship for future new entrants to Estate farm tenancies.

4.3 Views of Clinton Devon Estates' stakeholders

Farming tenants

There was a good response rate from Clinton Devon Estates tenant farmers to the Stakeholder Survey with 7 (23% of tenant farming cohort) taking part and 1 tenant farmer taking part in interviews. A summary of the views of tenant farmers can be found at figure 4.1.

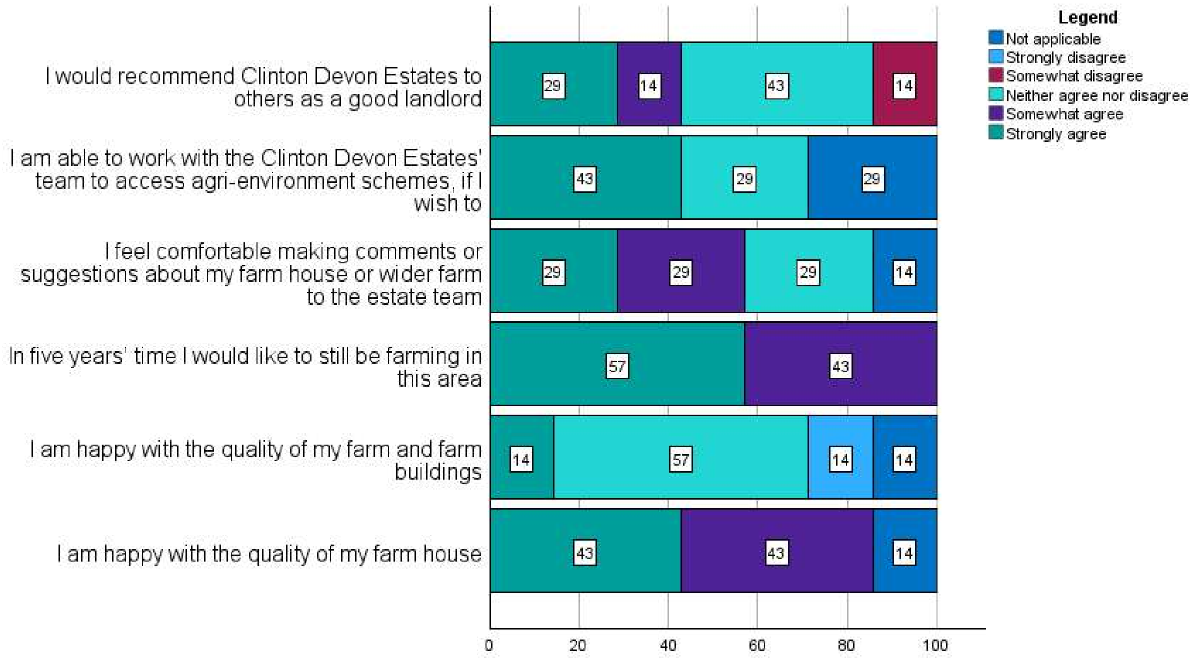

Figure 4. 1: Farm tenants' views, percentage of cohort agree/disagree

On the whole farm tenants were positive about their relationship with the Estate and the opportunities afforded to them as tenant farmers on the Estate.

> *"As far as landlords go, they are very good landlords and as it's give and take. I look after my tenanted farm and it is mutually appreciated." #Farmtenant1*

> *"Very happy, have always got on really well with the Estate and think they are a force for good in this area." #Farmtenant2.*

> *"It's a privilege to be a tenant on a farm... I would say the estate on the whole are very, very reasonable on rent... the Estate themselves should be recognised for giving farmers an opportunity." #FarmTenant3*

Most of the Estate's current farm tenants have grown up on the Estate and could reflect on historic relationships between the Estate and its farm tenants, as well as their perception of the relationships between their ancestors and the Estate. One farming tenant who had this long view, could express their difficulties in adapting to the growing professionalisation of the Estate's management of their relationship with their tenant farmers.

"…so the estate have progressed a lot over the years, and sometimes as a tenant, you struggle to know where they're to. So they've evolved, and they had dragged me into their way of thinking, which, for me, has been a little bit harder." #FarmTenant3

One tenant contrasted the more historic *laissez faire* approach to making changes on their tenant farm with the contemporary professionalised approach.

"In my granddad and my father's generation… The agent would come on the farm, you'd have a chit-chat, you'd get an okay, so the job was done, sorted. The agent would disappear and you'd do what you discussed. There was, I don't think there's hardly any paperwork, getting permission and then waiting six months for someone to make [a decision]." #FarmTenant3

For this tenant, they would value greater communication with the Estate about strategic priorities for land management on tenant farms. They did not need peer-to-peer learning events which might replicate those facilitated by FWAG or other regional organisations, but wanted to understand more about the priorities for environmental land management, which might help streamline decision-making about making changes on farm.

Commercial tenants, licensed businesses and contractors

There was a modest response from commercial tenants to the Stakeholder Survey with 6 responses (5% of total commercial tenant cohort) taking part in the survey and 1 commercial tenant taking part in interviews. An overview of these responses can be found at figure 4.2.

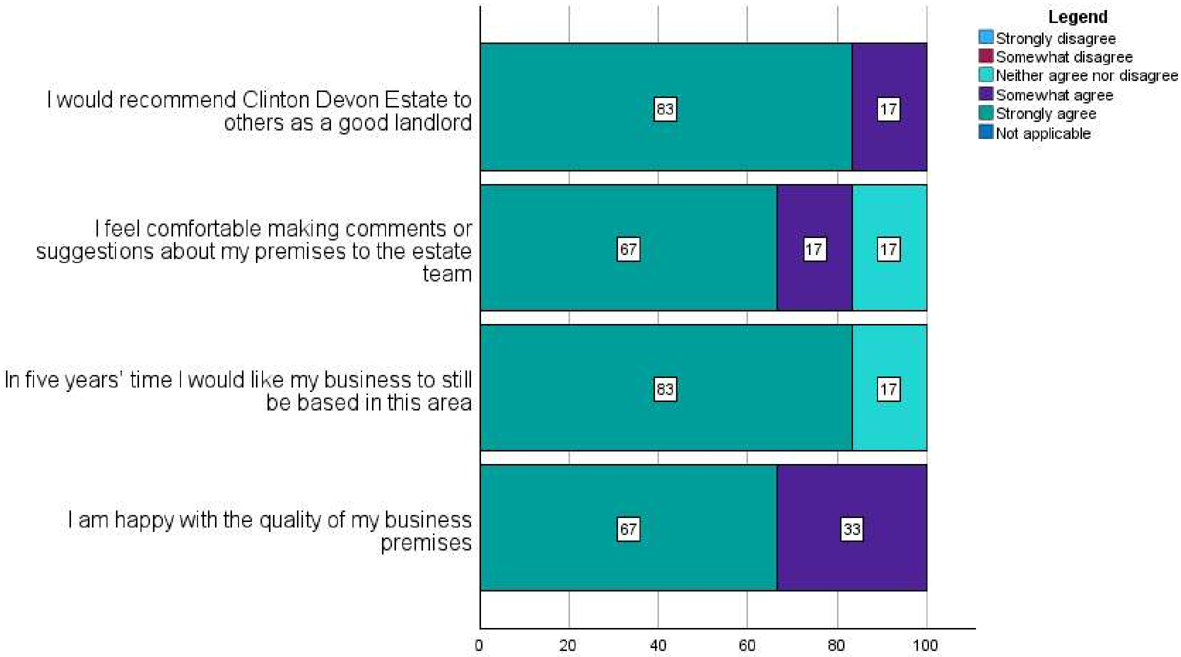

Figure 4.2: Commercial tenants' views, percentage of cohort agree/disagree

Few commercial tenants who contributed to the research provided written comments. The comment from #Commercialtenant1 below indicates that a largely independent, hands-off approach is both expected and valued from commercial tenants.

"We think we have a very good relationship with the estate... We don't have a huge amount to do with the Estate because, which I think is hopefully a good thing and that they recognise that we're a good commercial tenant and that we share their values and we share their objectives and we're doing things with the [business] that they would want us to do." #Commercialtenant1

Where commercial tenants did respond to the invitation to participate, these tenants particularly praised the values of the Estate and expressed a desire to be more closely aligned with the Estate's sustainability and nature restoration goals. There is perhaps an opportunity for the Estate to bring a greater variety of stakeholders with them as they pursue nature restoration projects such as Heaths to Sea in future, no matter their geographic location on the Estate.

There were 10 responses to the stakeholder survey from licensed businesses operating from the estate (20% of the total cohort). Comments from licensed businesses operating within the Estate boundaries reflected some of the known challenges faced by the Estate and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust in accommodating access to greenspace by a range of user groups, as #Licensedbusiness1 illustrates:

"The team at PBH and CE have been awesome, can't fault them. If I was to have 1 complaint (nothing to do with the team) it's the amount of dog mess on both Mutters Moor and Woodbury Common." #Licensedbusiness1

A total of 6 contractors respondent to the invitation to take part in the Stakeholder Survey. No other types of supplier completed the survey despite being invited to do so. Employees particularly valued the contribution of quality contractors to the success of both in-hand businesses and Estate lettings. Contractors who responded to the Stakeholder Survey, were reciprocal in valuing their relationship with the Estate. In particular contractors commented on the collaborative approach of the employees on the Estate and the willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and ideas sharing.

"We are extremely proud to be a contractor to Clinton, and we hope our relationship can continue long into the future." #Contractor1

"In general they are a good organisation to work for, forestry plays a big part and over the years it's been great working with them and taking on new ideas to secure the success of forestry in the future." #Contractor2

Employees, apprentices and students on work placement

A total of 13 employees (including apprentices and those on work placement) took part in the Stakeholder Survey representing 21% of the total employee cohort. 9 employees took part in interviews. An overview of the views of the employees working for the Estate can be found at figure 4.3.

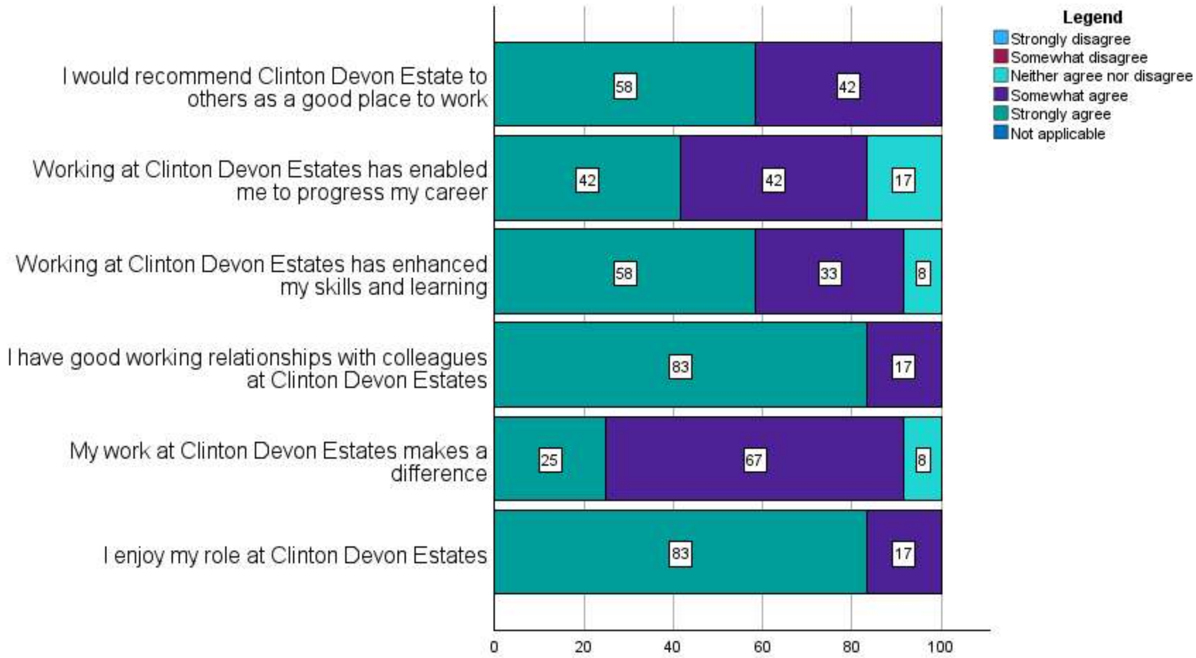

Figure 4.3: The views of Clinton Devon Estates employees, apprentices and those on work placement, percentage of cohort agree/disagree

Employees valued the trust placed in them by trustees and the family to push boundaries and explore best practice. Employees mentioned being able to pull together business cases and explore a wide range of options for changes to service delivery with the trustees and family openminded about exploring different options on their merits.

"There was lots of trust in him for making that movement. There was probably limited understanding of the economics of it. But … the understanding of the economics of it in the wider industry is a bit sparse, I'd say as well so… There were people in the trustees and the family that were very used to a conventional model of silviculture and moving away from that is a major step." #Employee2

However, for some employees with a long history of working for the Estate they could remember a time before the Estate had professionalised where it was more straightforward to innovate or try new things without going through an approvals process. Generally employees understood why this was the case, however. Most employees, particularly those who have come to the Estate after a career with another organisation valued the decision-making frameworks in place and felt they were streamlined and agile. #Employee1 on this:

"Its an enabling rather than sort of, stifling, suffocating kind of bureaucracy." #Employee1

Employees valued the investment by the Estate into their professional development, learning and training.

"I mean they've always been very supportive. If I've ever wanted a course to go on, I've always had the backing to go on it. So, I've always found this quite a progressive organisation. We've always punched a bit higher than our actual weight, if that makes sense." #Employee8

All Clinton Devon Estates employees talked often about drawing on the skills and experience of team members in other departments and contributing to cross-departmental working. For members of the management team, continuing to support the training and development of team members so they could continue to meet the ongoing opportunities and challenges the organisation might face remained a priority.

"Every business is only as good as the people that are working there. So, from my point of view training and the well-being of your employees, it's just fundamental and if you get that right, you can be adaptable and flexible and you can and feel quite secure and knowing that you can make good decisions." #Employee6

Employees also were impressed with the quality of work and contributions made by apprentices and students on work placement. Employees valued the trust placed in them by colleagues and management to manage their portfolio of work, as #Employee3 explains:

"I would say I haven't had a better employer. I'm trying to put my finger on why that is? I think there is an openness about working here. And it's not that there aren't rules, but there is actually freedom about how you work." #Employee3

4.4 Overview of economic contribution of Clinton Devon Estates operations and associated businesses

The economic impact of Clinton Devon Estates operations and those of its tenants and licensed businesses has been estimated by calculating the Gross Value Added generated through the activity of the Estate, the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Group, spending with suppliers, agricultural and diversification activity on tenant farms, commercial tenant activity and the activities of licensed businesses operating within the boundaries of the Estate. Figure 4.4 gives an overview of these estimates and Technical Annex A provides more detailed information about how the estimates were calculated.

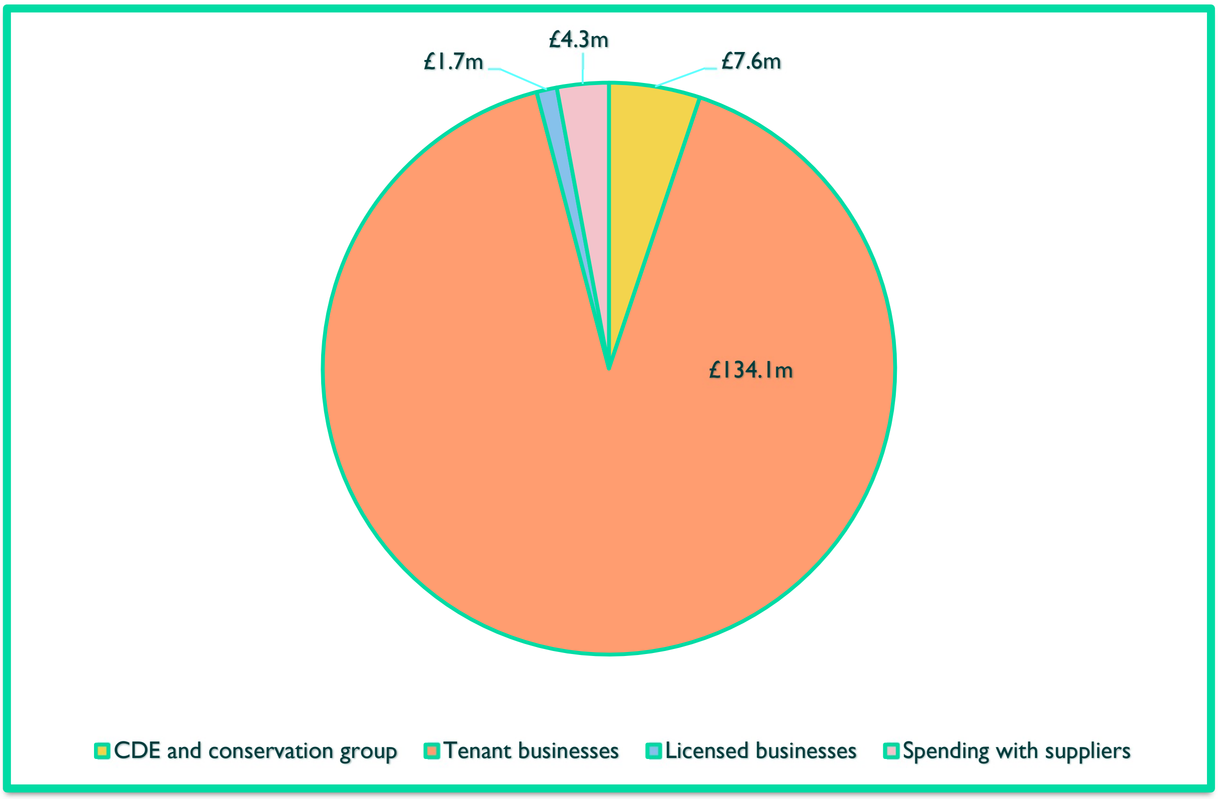

Figure 4.4: chart demonstrating the proportion of direct GVA across Clinton Devon Estates operations (2024/25)

This total direct GVA across Clinton Devon Estates, allied organisations, tenants, licensed businesses and spend with suppliers represents a GVA of £14,786 per hectare.

4.5 The direct economic impact of the Clinton Devon Estates

The Gross Value Added (GVA) of the direct operations of the Estate is derived from the Estate's activity in key business areas which includes: property and land management; renewable energy generation; property and energy development projects; and in-hand farming and forestry activity. Technical Annex A provides more detail about the methodology used to calculate the GVA for the Estate's direct operations.

The GVA of the direct operations of Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust and the East Devon Heaths Land Management Company are derived from these organisations activities which includes conservation management and nature restoration. See Technical Annex A for more information about the methodology used to calculate the GVA for the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation group's direct operations.

The combined operations of the Estate and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation group supports 62 FTE employees, as well as 3 apprentices and 5 work-placements per annum (2024/25).

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Clinton Devon Estates	£6,897,603	£5,607,808	£7,294,077
Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust	£20,481	£22,214	£21,652
East Devon Heaths Land Management Company	£282,734	£274,703	£297,568
Total across the Estate and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation group	**£7,200,818**	**£5,904,725**	**£7,613,297**

Table 4. 1: GVA direct operations of Clinton Devon Estate and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation group

4.5 The economic impact of supplier spending by Clinton Devon Estates

Over the last three years (2022/23 – 2024/25) Clinton Devon Estates spent £15.6m with local suppliers (defined as suppliers with EX postcodes) equating to 41% of supplier spending over this period. In 2023/24 of the £9.7m of spend with all suppliers 20% related to construction (SIC codes 41-43), 11% related to agriculture (SIC code 01) and 10% related to the manufacture of food products, including animal feed (SIC code 10). The GVA of this spending for 2023/24 and 2024/25 is detailed in Table 4.2.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Spending with suppliers (direct)	No data	**£4,205,027**	**£4,331,178**
Spending with suppliers (indirect)	No data	£686,275	£706,863
Total direct and indirect GVA, supplier spend	No data	£4,891,303	£5,038,042

Table 4. 2: GVA Clinton Devon Estate spending with suppliers - direct, indirect and combined direct and indirect GVA

It is estimated that the indirect impact of this supplier spending (i.e. the GVA of Clinton Devon Estates' suppliers' spending with their own suppliers) was £686,275 in 2023/24 and £706,863 in 2024/25. However, this number was derived by using a national multiplier to estimate this indirect impact and so should be interpreted cautiously (see Technical Annex A for more detail).

4.6 The economic impact of tenant and licensed businesses operating on the Estate

The Estate's holdings provide opportunities for tenant businesses, which include: 30 tenant farms; 2 share farming operations; and, 128 commercial tenancies. Tenant farms on the Estate support a wide range of farming activity including dairy farming, livestock, arable, mixed farming and general cropping. Tenant farms on the estate are also able to pursue a wide range of diversification activities which include: farm shops, property development, haulage, crop processing, agricultural contracting, higher education and leisure and tourism attractions, for example. It is estimated that tenant farming enterprises on the estate directly supports 85.5 FTE agricultural employment (farm tenants and employees) and 683.5 FTE employment within diversification enterprises.

Commercial tenancies also provide a wide range of opportunities, mostly for small and medium-sized businesses. The Estate's commercial holdings which are tenanted include: business parks, industrial estates, serviced offices, telecoms infrastructure and quarrying infrastructure, for example. These holdings provide opportunities for a wide range of sectors including: timber and sawmill; real estate management and lettings; restaurants and leisure venues; retail; and emergency services, for example. It is estimated that commercial tenancies on the estate directly supports 1,323 FTE employees.

The Estate also licenses businesses to operate on the common land of the estate, providing opportunities for outdoor fitness, outdoor hobby and dog walking businesses. Technical Annex A provides more information about the methodology used to estimate the GVA of tenant and licensed businesses operating on the Estate. It is estimated that licensed businesses operating within the boundaries of Clinton Devon directly supports 23.5 FTE employment.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Farm tenant businesses	£27,524,293	£28,625,265	£29,484,023
Commercial tenant businesses	£97,688,463	£101,608,260	£104,658,564
TOTAL tenant businesses	**£125,212,757**	**£130,233,526**	**£134,142,587**
Licensed businesses operating on Clinton Devon Estates land	**£1,652,625**	**£1,718,730**	**£1,770,292**

Table 4. 3: GVA direct operations of farm and commercial tenants and licensed businesses operating on the estate

The indirect impacts of the Estate's tenant businesses (farming and commercial) can be estimated using cautiously applied national multipliers (see Technical Annex A for more detail). It is estimated that the indirect employment effect of Clinton Devon tenant businesses' spending with their own suppliers represents 447.8 FTE. The estimated indirect GVA contributions of the Estate's tenant businesses' spending within their supply chains is estimated in Table 4.4 below.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total tenant businesses direct and indirect GVA	£147,643,507	£153,394,091	£158,000,444
Total tenant businesses indirect GVA only	£24,807,858	£25,778,876	£26,554,717

Table 4. 4: Indirect GVA contributions of farm and commercial tenants and licensed businesses

4.7 Social value of employment

Two separate social value calculations were made to reflect the wellbeing uplift generated by employment opportunities within the Estate and within tenant and other businesses operating within Estate boundaries.

For employment opportunities where the job quality is unknown, a financial proxy of £2,080 (2019 prices) has been applied per FTE. This figure was then adjusted for inflation. Technical Annex B details the methodology used to derive this figure. This baseline employment wellbeing figure has been applied to estimates of jobs created within tenant businesses and licensed businesses operating on the Estate – see Table 4.5.

For those directly employed by Clinton Devon Estates, an additional financial proxy of £3,162 (2019 prices) per FTE was created, reflecting knowledge of employee satisfaction with the job quality, workplace relationships and opportunities for skills and training reported in the Stakeholder Survey. This figure was then adjusted for inflation. Technical Annex B details the methodology used to derive this figure. This high-quality employment additional financial proxy was combined with the baseline employment wellbeing figure and applied to direct employment by the Estate – see Table 4.5.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift	
Employees directly employed by Clinton Devon Estates	£403,465
All jobs Clinton Devon Estates tenant farm enterprises	£1,967,745
All jobs Clinton Devon Estates commercial tenants	£3,503,903
All jobs licensed businesses operating on Clinton Devon Estates land	£60,685

Table 4. 5: Wellbeing uplift of employment opportunities associated with Clinton Devon Estate

A similar methodology was followed to develop a financial proxy to understand the wellbeing uplift generated by apprenticeship and work placement opportunities on the Estate. No estimates were made of apprenticeships or work placements taking place in tenant or licensed businesses operating within Estate boundaries. For apprenticeships, a total financial proxy of £3,337 (2019 prices) per apprentice was applied, once adjusted for inflation. For work placements, a per week financial proxy of £69.52 (2019 prices) was applied, once adjusted for inflation. Technical Annex B details the methodology used to derive this figure.

Published financial proxies have been developed to indicate the wider economic uplift generated through the employment of apprentices and work placement studies which anticipate the later impact of the apprenticeship on their learning potential. These financial proxies are discussed in greater detail in Technical Annex B.

See Table 4.6 for more information on the social value generated through providing opportunities for apprentices and work placement students.

Social value calculation	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift		
Apprentices/one year placement	£12,428	£12,572
Intern/work experience placement	£259	£437
Economic uplift		
Apprentices/one year placement	£39,879	£40,342
Intern/work experience placement	£642	£1,082

Table 4. 6: Wellbeing and economic uplift associated with employing apprentices and interns

5. Placeshaping

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 we explored the Estate's approach to creating economic and employment opportunities. We looked, in particular, at how some of the closest stakeholders to the Estate – its farm tenants, commercial tenants, contractors and employees – understand their place within the Estate. We also made an estimate of the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the wider Estate's activities, as well as an estimate of the social value generated as a result of the employment opportunities associated with the Estate's activities. In this Chapter, we take a closer look at the Estate's strategic role as placeshaper within the local areas in which it operates. We look at what the role of place has in the Estate's decision making across housing, commercial and land-based projects. We explore some of the tensions and complexities the Estate encounters as it engages in placeshaping activities, through the perspectives of the Estate management team and through strategic partners and community stakeholders. Finally, we estimate the social value of the Estate's placeshaping activities (where this is measurable).

5.2 Stewardship, the long-view and relationship with place

The Estate's 2030 Strategy outlines the Estate's commitment to stewardship of place to the Estate's core holdings in North and East Devon. The commitment to place forms a guiding principle, led by the family and trustees and enacted by the management team. John Varley, CEO, recognises that it requires a long-term commitment from employees, trustees and the family to hold and sustain these relationships with the wider community, in which families and the Estate have been linked across generations.

"A conscious decision by the family and the trustees, and led by the family, is to focus on "place". The whole principle of place is understanding what you have in any particular location or landscape and valuing it. For example, you own a cricket club, you have a village hall, you own a few trees or woodland, you own this and the other, and therefore, you are impacting on people and need to build relationships and trust. It changes how you look at assets and property - that's a really fascinating thing." John Varley, CEO

John points in particular to relationships between the Estate, its farm tenants, some commercial and residential tenants and even particular villages, with historic, enduring multigenerational relationships forming the foundation of the Estate's understanding of place. However, employees also pointed to another interpretation of the Estate's commitment to place, in providing ongoing access to physical spaces in which communities can form their own networks and sense of place, with the Estate at a remove. #Employee6 on this:

"And you know, that sense of place. Belonging to the land, belonging to your environment, I think it's really, really important ... things like our allotments, cricket pitches, sports pitches, those sorts of things, public access, rights of way. The Commons that provides all of that physical space for that to happen, we can't necessarily, as an organisation create the happening, but we can provide the place for the happening to happen." #Employee6

Some members of the management team pointed to a third, more dynamic, forward-looking commitment to place. In this interpretation, the Estate has a key role to play in shaping the places in which it operates, providing opportunities and infrastructure that aim to meet the needs of the place in future.

"[There was] a lot of rebuffing about development and [people saying] that the estate is green washing. But I think we should hold our head up high and actually say no what we're doing is meeting environmental requirements we're [producing] food, growing trees, we're looking at how do we support communities in terms of commercial space. And we're also providing current housing and new housing... it's the right thing to be doing." #Employee4

These intertwined notions of how place is enacted by the Estate – relationally, passively and dynamically – form the backdrop to our exploration of the Estate's placeshaping role within the remainder of this chapter.

5.3 Housing developments

Over the last 25 years, the Estate has reclaimed a previously held role as a housing developer; continuing a legacy of housing creation that can be traced back to the Estate houses built by Mark Rolle in the 1880s. Recent developments include Plumb Park in Exmouth, which was a development of 350 houses, 25% of which were affordable homes, delivered as a joint venture with Taylor Wimpey. In addition to delivering a proportion of affordable housing with gardens, the development also provided access to open space, a community growing space and a new hill top park on Donkey Hill. The Estate worked with Cavanna Homes to create the King Alfred's Way development of 40 homes in Newton Poppleford. Other smaller developments either with planning or completed include: Old Venmore Farm in Woodbury; Exton, East Devon; and the Malt Scoop development in Merton, for example.

"I think some of the projects we've run, the housing developments, we've learned a lot about engaging with communities of interest and recognising we're not a normal housing developer. We don't just concrete over the countryside and disappear off. We build homes and communities and then stay here. And therefore, we've learned the hard way, but are now, I think, addressing it in a different way. Because when I joined, we weren't doing much development." John Varley, CEO

The management team at the Estate spoke about the local pressures on housing supply, particularly in East Devon, and the perception that landowners such as the Estate had a duty to work with the local planning authority to put forward potential sites for consideration in the Local Plan. The Estate team are conscious that there has been and will continue to be dissatisfaction from local communities about the sites chosen for development. However, there is a perception that were the Estate not forthcoming with potential sites, there would potentially also be a backlash from local communities which might feel that the Estate was "hoarding" land needed to build new homes.

"It's really difficult. I really strongly feel that the sites that we've put forward in the Local Plan either now, or the ones we've developed historically over the last sort of 20 years, are in the right locations. They are commensurate in size for those localities and that they have added a legacy to

those communities. By how they look, the facilities that they have, allotments and green space and then what they've contributed in terms of CIL money and section 106[1] provisions." #Employee4

Typically, the Estate identifies potential sites for development as part of the planning process, working closely with planning consultants to acquire planning permission and then sell the land with specific covenants. However, this approach can be flexible depending on the location and community, John Varley on this:

"We did actually build three or four of our own bungalows in north Devon, [in] Merton, which we kept. They met a huge demand from retired residents. But actually doing that is not very financially viable, but we've done it because we were, again, led by a sense of place. It wasn't about making large returns, it was about helping the community." John Varley, CEO

For the Estate, ensuring that the housing developments they bring to market are of a high-quality means working closely with partner planning consultants, architects and developers to try to maintain high standards within the development, even if the land is sold on. As #Employee4 explains, the Estate is conscious that any developments will remain associated with it and they want that association to be one the Estate and community can be proud of.

"So that we actually do leave a legacy ... Even sites that we're going to sell off, we're not having any sort of joint venture on or ongoing relationship with, we've still got to maybe farm around it and we've got to drive past it every day." #Employee4

However, as John Varley points out, there remain challenges for the Estate in ensuring that the standards they have outlined for developments at point of sale are honoured, once the Estate no longer has ownership of that land.

"... where we put in place management agreements, all sorts of stuff, people are still ... tearing up trees and gardens and things. It is really hard, even with the tightest covenants... I mean, the majority of developers don't give a monkeys. We did and still do because we're still here. But it is really hard. And we know that talking to other estates as well." John Varley, CEO

This theme is picked up again in section 5.6 where we explore the views of the Estate's stakeholders on the Estate's approach to housing development.

5.4 Renewable energy projects and energy security

As noted in Chapter 1 – An introduction, the transition away from centrally provided fossil fuel-derived energy sources towards decentralised networks of renewable energy sources is critical to both meeting

[1] CIL refers to Community Infrastructure Levy, a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new developments, to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support that and other developments in the area. Section 106 agreements (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) are legally binding obligations between developers and local authorities to provide infrastructure needs as part of the granting of planning permission. Section 106 agreements can include the provision of services and infrastructure such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.

Government's net zero targets and enhancing energy security in the UK. As #Employee7 explains, to support this energy transition, new infrastructure is needed in regions to support renewable energy production and manage peaks and troughs in solar or wind power availability.

"… with that become the intermittency risk that, you know the sun isn't shining, or the wind isn't blowing. What do you do? Well … partial solution is gas peakers and battery storage that can flex that demand, take the peaks out of that demand curve. So it would be really good to see that happen, good for energy security in East Devon." #Employee7

The Estate has engaged in a number of significant projects to support this transition. In 2015 the Estate developed a small solar farm, comprising 25,000 panels and capable of providing energy to the equivalent of 1,200 homes a year in Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton and to Liverton Business Park. More recently, the Estate is in the process of establishing a 6MW gas peaker to meet energy demand during short-term peaks in demand. Peakers are designed to become operational quickly to meet short-term needs and shut down rapidly once that demand has dissipated. The peaker, which the Estate is establishing at Liverton, will be able to supply energy to 6,000 homes once completed. The Estate is also in the process of establishing a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a 60MW project using a brownfield site at Blackhill Quarry which should connect to the grid in late 2027. The Estate has established planning consent, the arrangements for connecting the site to the grid and will work with a developer who will install and manage the site. The BESS, like the peaker, will provide energy capacity at times of high-demand.

The Estate management team reflected on some of the challenges of engaging with this agenda, which although critically important to central Government priorities, can come into conflict with the priorities for local areas held by local communities and planning authorities.

"It's challenging in the sense that you've got to take them on that journey and knowing that a lot of these projects have got quite a lot of fierce public opposition against them for a whole range of reasons. It might be because of the aesthetics on the battery side, a lot of concern over fire risk. There was a very contentious scheme [in a different part of the county], which has been knocked back where the councillors haven't been on side. Despite the fact that there is a really big need for such energy projects. The difficulty is that the planning officers recognise that that they should be putting it forward for approval and yet the people that are making decisions, are not happy about that and it gets kicked down the line." #Employee7

The Estate follows an internal decision-making framework to weigh up the environmental, economic and reputational impacts of potential new commercial developments on a given piece of land to ensure they are a good fit for the local area. This incorporates wider considerations such as the ability to connect to the grid, any specific designations on the land. #Employee7 gives an example of how this framework can lead the Estate to discount potential projects, even if these offer strong financial returns.

"We have recently had an opportunity in [part of the Estate] for solar, which was a potentially a massive project and that that was an opportunity where all the factors I've just discussed came to play where it was something that would have a significant impact across the range. You know in

terms of financial sustainability, environmental considerations … In many ways it looked quite good. There were question marks over deliverability. It's a complicated topography... And really important amongst all that was consideration of people's lives... you know, taking away agricultural land... But it would be a significant change. And then there's the reputational bit to piece to consider … everyone came together and discussed this. So it wasn't progressed and it was a lot to do with deliverability, but all of these points came out." #Employee7

5.5 Nature recovery and placeshaping

Managing environmental challenges at a landscape scale

As a large landowner, the Estate has various statutory responsibilities to manage landscape scale environmental challenges which have the potential to impact beyond its own borders. There are various ways in which the Estate acts to take flood management measures (e.g. leaky dams, cover crops), tackle invasive species (e.g. control of *Prunus laurocerasus*, *Rhododendrum ponticum*) or manage deer populations (through continuous management across North and East Devon) on its land with positive impacts for its neighbours. However, arguably the Estate has made the biggest contributions to landscape scale management via working in close partnership to deliver: the Pebblebed Heaths National Nature Reserve; the River Otter Beaver trial; the ELMS test and trial; and, the Lower Otter Restoration Project. Currently plans are in development for a landscape recovery project, Heaths to Sea, which the Estate hopes will be approved by DEFRA and continue to deliver landscape scale nature recovery and environmental improvements within this area of East Devon.

Pebblebed Heaths National Nature Reserve

The Pebblebed Heaths are the largest continuous area of lowland heaths in Devon and represent a specialised habitat of importance to local wildlife. The heaths are the site of ancient monuments of note, such as Woodbury Castle, as well as an area of land with a long history of open access to the public. In 2007, the Estate established the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust to create an arms-length charitable organisation to manage the Heaths in partnership with other organisations including the RSPB, Natural England, Devon Wildlife Trust, East Devon National Landscape and local authorities. Since around 2010 the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust team has grown from one or two rangers to a team of 10 people with a wider remit to drive forward improvements on the Heaths, not only in terms of conservation and habitat restoration, but also in terms of public access, outdoor education and volunteering (more on this in Chapters 6 and 7).

In the almost 20 years since the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust was created, the team has delivered significant improvements to the conditions of the Heaths, as well as formal recognition of the importance of the habitat. In 2016 the Estate and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust conducted a biodiversity audit of the Pebblebed Heaths, which found that the Heaths was home to over 3,000 species. These included a proportion of heathland specialist species, such as the Dartford warbler and the nightjar, but also a larger proportion of ecological generalists who favoured the mosaic of habitats offered by the heaths' scrub, woodland and grassland provided through active conservation management (Bridgewater & Kerry, 2016).

The Estate has also led on a number of significant structural projects to support the work of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust and maintain public access to the heaths. #Employee4 pointed to work to revoke the 1925 Law of Property Act deed and replace it with the legislative framework provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to ensure public access to the Heaths in perpetuity. CEO John Varley and #Employee7 pointed to work led by the Estate to deregister and exchange common land associated with the heaths by removing a 1.7 hectare inaccessible industrial site and exchanging this for 3.4 hectares of woodland. Although the work to deregister and exchange common land had the potential to be controversial, the Estate worked closely with key partners to ensure the benefits of the common land exchange were understood. John Varley, CEO on this:

"...because it made sense to do that and giving double the amount of other land [to be] common land and the way we did that [#StrategicPartner4] is saying [they] wished other landowners would do that." John Varley, CEO

In 2021, the Pebblebed Heaths formerly received National Nature Reserve status, making it one of only 224 areas across England recognised for their habitats, species or ecology of national importance (Natural England, 2024). This designation sits alongside the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status, and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) status previously awarded. The Estate team credits the strong networks and partnerships build between the Estate, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, Friends of the Commons, strategic partners and others in making achievements such as this possible.

"We have a national nature reserve... the Estate has delivered multiples of what we would have delivered if we didn't have the outreach and we hadn't built those networks." John Varley, CEO

The River Otter Beaver Trial

From 2015 to 2020 the Estate participated, as a key partner, in The River Otter Beaver Trial which aimed to monitor and understand the positive and negative impacts of the reintroduction of beavers to the River Otter catchment area. At the inception of the trial, there was growing public support for the reintroduction of key keystone species such as beavers to UK landscapes from which they had become extinct, but there was much hesitancy from landowners towards facilitating the reintroduction on their land. John Varley, CEO explains how the Estate carefully weighed up the risks and benefits of being involved in the trial at a time when so much was unknown about how the beavers would influence the surrounding landscape.

"Beavers, tricky... but we still ended up engaging with the Wildlife Trust on beavers because we knew it was the right thing to do, even though the late Lord Clinton himself was sceptical. But he was right to be sceptical... But we also were right, I think, as an organisation to influence the management of them." John Varley, CEO

The number of breeding pairs of beavers grew rapidly over the course of the five year monitoring project, with thirteen separate territories identified. The evaluation report recognised that land manager attitude towards the beaver reintroduction had a significant impact on the perception of the impact of the beavers and the willingness to accommodate their impacts (Brazier et al., 2020). For

#Employee5, while acknowledging the challenges of accommodating beavers within a productive farming business, they could recognise the wider landscape-scale benefits.

"For example, Beavers, which are a massive pain for us from a farming perspective, but we accept that the Estate has an agenda which it wants to see through and so we accommodate that and we accept that if we lose a little bit of ground then that's part of it. And there have been some unexpected benefits in terms of creating a biodiverse environment in that area, recreating wetlands and seeing nature flood into those areas in terms of an increased species diversity." #Employee5

In addition to the improvements to biodiversity and habitat creation mentioned by #Employee5, the evaluation report from the beaver trial identified other significant benefits. These benefits included an increase in ecotourism, additional traffic to local businesses, flood alleviation and improvements in water quality. During the trial, beaver dams were found to significantly slow the flow of water, with flows during storms on average 30% slower leaving beaver dam sites than when they entered (Brazier et al., 2020, p. 70). An estimate of potential weighted annual average damage costs avoided by the reduction of flooding by beavers to 50 residential properties within the catchment suggested a wide range of monetary impacts from £1,631 to £332,622 over a ten year period (including inflation) (Brazier et al., 2020, p. 116). Disbenefits included within the evaluation report included impacts to agriculture (particularly maize production), variable impacts on fisheries and costs of managing the height and location of beaver dams.

Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) test and trial

From 2019 to 2021 the Estate participated in an ELMS test and trial which incorporated the Beer and Lower Otter catchments, an area encompassing 4,950 hectares of agricultural and productive forestry land. The trial aimed to bring together a wide range of locally based partners – including tenant farmers, a wide range of public and civic actors, local environmental groups and neighbouring landowners – to cost and plan how environmental land management objectives could be funded and delivered both at the individual farm level and in an integrated way across farm and organisational boundaries. For #Employee1 the first step in this process was sitting down with partners and exploring which public benefits might be deliverable from Estate land.

"What does society want from us? Post-Brexit, Michael Gove, public money for public benefit - what does that mean for our area? Let's get everybody to sit around the table and tell us what they want. That was the kind of the First ELMS trial was saying [to partners] … actually what are you wanting from us? … Not necessarily the landowner, but from the land." #Employee1

Bringing together this wide range of place-based stakeholders identified a range of potential goods and services which productive land managers could help to deliver including greater access, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the reduction in environmentally damaging production and land management practices (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b). But as #Employee1 points out, it also provided a framework for the Estate, home-farm and tenant farmers to talk about the priorities raised and rethink what the priorities might be for land-based businesses on the Estate moving forward.

"It gave us that… output to try to kind of use that to then communicate with our tenants and our internal farm about - this is what people are wanting, if we can deliver some of the stuff, you know that that's brownie points and potentially you know you can draw down money to help us do that work." #Employee1

The ELMS test and trial while helping to facilitate conservations about the future for land management within these areas of the Estate, also pointed to the challenges of supporting tenants to realise environmental land management goals given the systemic pressures inherent in tenant farming businesses. Some of these issues and opportunities have been taken forward within the planning for the LRP Heaths to Sea (H2C) – see section 5.6.

Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP)

The Lower Otter Restoration Project was an ambitious and challenging project which spanned ten years from 2014 to 2024, from the scoping stage (2014-2016) through the design and implementation phase (2021-2023) through to project close. The project aimed to work with local communities and partner organisations to improve the downstream environment of the River Otter and the Otter Estuary, managing flood risk and mitigating the future impacts of climate change. Actions taken during the project included improving existing footpaths and establishing new footpaths; establishing a rare inter-tidal habitat; restoring the flood plain and reestablishing footpaths and roads within this context; relocating Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club; and working with local tenant farmers.

For the Estate team, the LORP project provided an opportunity not only to tackle the flooding risks which the preliminary scoping had identified, but also to deliver a wide range of public goods for the local area, such as improving access and accessibility to the inter-tidal habitat being created.

"It's helped solve problems with fluvial flooding and the restrictions and that we had on the land it provided environmental goods, it's provided public goods, it wasn't about the finances at all … from our point of view we didn't do it for that… So I think that really showed that we saw the bigger picture and saw an opportunity to make those landscape changes." #Employee4

"And I go down [there and] … you've got these amazing new footpaths. Yeah, there were people on a mobility scooter with a pair of binoculars, you know, because they could never have done that before… the Cricket Club that has a future for the next 100 plus years. They're playing county standard cricket on it. You know, they had the Indian National disability team playing at that place. Before it was a crap wicket, you know, it was like waterlogged… it's unrecognisable." #Employee1

Semi-quantitative natural capital accounts carried out to measure the impact of the LORP project suggested a total natural asset value improvement of *circa* £11.2 million (over the 60 year accounting period), including improvements to public heath and wellbeing and storage of 8,000 tonnes of carbon within the newly created habitat (ABPmer, 2023, p. 17).

The flood management impacts of the LORP project are also significant for the wider East Devon area. The summary report points to the 55ha of inter-tidal habitat established in the Lower Otter providing compensatory habitat to enable the Environment Agency to continue to manage flood risk to 2,795 properties in the Exe Estuary (ABPmer, 2023, p. 18). The summary report also points to the LORP project enabling the Environment Agency to go-ahead with an additional six flood risk management projects in the Exe Estuary, with an estimated direct cost of around £23 million, and total benefits of £375 million associated with these additional projects (ABPmer, 2023, p. 18).

However, while LORP has been able to deliver significant tangible benefits for the local area, the Estate management team pointed to the initial challenges of delivering the project, particularly in bringing people on board. Community engagement was a significant pillar of the LORP project. However the Estate found it challenging to build and maintain trust while the project was underway. Employees at the Estate are reflective about the engagement challenges they faced during the LORP project and have taken learning from this experience – more of which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

"But probably we were slightly less evolved, I suppose, probably made a few more mistakes, so maybe didn't get the right people around the table to begin with. But [it was] a much bigger scheme, very difficult to steer through partly because there's a lot more infrastructure and there's a lot of kind of like changing something radically." #Employee1

Stakeholders also attested to the challenges the Estate faced in building community support for LORP during the planning and delivery phases (see section 5.6) and how feelings about the project have changed so positively since it was completed.

Potential future placeshaping within the Heaths to Sea (H2C) project

The Estate has recently developed a proposal to DEFRA to deliver the H2C LRP within the lower Otter Valley catchment in East Devon. The H2C project aims to transform 4,666 hectares of farm, forest and natural land area into a more connected and resilient landscape which is nature rich, ecologically healthy and can support food production, net zero, timber, and access needs. Specific productive and environmental ambitions for the project include: creating 240 ha of wetland habitats; bringing at least 80% of the Pebblebed Heaths SSSI into favourable condition; increasing conservation grazing on the Pebblebed Heaths and Mutters Moor; establishing 165 hectare mosaic of wood pasture, scrub and species-rich grassland managed through low-intensity grazing on Otterton Hill; 80-90 hectares of new productive woodland; and, establishing a continuous cover approach to managing 700 ha of existing woodland.

The H2C project is complex and ambitious, encompassing six landowners, 17 tenant land managers as well as multiple project stakeholders. The vast majority (99% of the proposed project area) is within the East Devon National Landscape (EDNL) and comprises approximately 25% of the total EDNL area. For internal Estate stakeholders, engaging with the aims of H2C are perhaps more straightforward; #Employee5 explains how the home farm's reversion to conventional farming from organic production has enabled home-farm to better support delivery of H2C objectives.

"But it's also enabled us to release, as I say, probably around 200 hectares for landscape recovery to do its thing, to do its thing properly rather than half-heartedly in a bit here, bit there, If they want to flood the Otter River Valley and they want to rewild Otterton Hill, then let's let them do that and do it properly. And we'll design a farming model that that can accommodate that." #Employee5

For tenant farmers, who occupy c. 2,521ha of the total proposed project area, the engagement with H2C and the possible impacts on income from production are potentially more complex to tackle within a tenant farming enterprise. The tenant farmers within this area, who were interviewed as part of the monitoring and evaluation baselining for the H2C project, pointed to the uncertainties with the policy landscape and the availability of support on offer from Government to deliver environmental improvements. Of those interviewed, 11 estimated that they derived at least 60% of their total income from food production and the added value from activities such as direct sales (Broomfield et al., 2025). #Employee5 explains that the Estate has been working closely with those tenants to support their engagement with H2C:

"… engaging with the tenants that are affected or potentially affected by landscape recovery and drawing up bespoke plans for each farm that should complement their farming business… utilises marginal agricultural value land and hopefully provides them with a sustainable longer term income on that land that they couldn't get from producing, milk, meat or cereals from." #Employee5

However, Estate efforts to support some of these impacted tenant businesses to diversify, for example through seeking planning permission to establish holiday lets, have been found to be challenging – as we will see within section 5.6.

The Estate has proposed a blended finance approach to fund the delivery of the H2C project with the majority of funding provided by Defra, as well as exploring the use of carbon credits, BNG and potential agreements with local infrastructure networks and local authorities (Clinton Devon Estates, 2026b). However, stakeholder uncertainty around the funding of the H2C project and the need for the Estate to raise private funding in additional to the public funding provided by DEFRA has raised questions about, and increased scrutiny of, development sites being brought forward in the vicinity of the H2C project geography and within the National Landscape. #Employee4 explains:

"Of that I've calculated with [H2C team] you know we're bringing forward probably 5 hectares of development land within that location. It's tiny. Really big for that community that it affects proportionally. Little sites dotted around. But you know I understand that impact you've got on the real local basis. But when you look at what the Estate's doing across the board and as a whole particularly with the H2C project." #Employee4

As we will see in section 5.6 which picks up this topic with the Estate's stakeholders, this topic of development within the H2C project area (and critically with the EDNL) remains a contested issue between the Estate and its stakeholders.

5.6 Stakeholder views

Overall stakeholder views

Overall, 128 stakeholders responded to the Value of a Rural Estate Stakeholder Survey. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to reflect on how well they understood the Estate to be performing as it carried out some of its place-based goals. Figure 5.1 provides an overview of stakeholder responses to this question. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders who responded were very positive about the Estate's efforts to achieve its place-based goals.

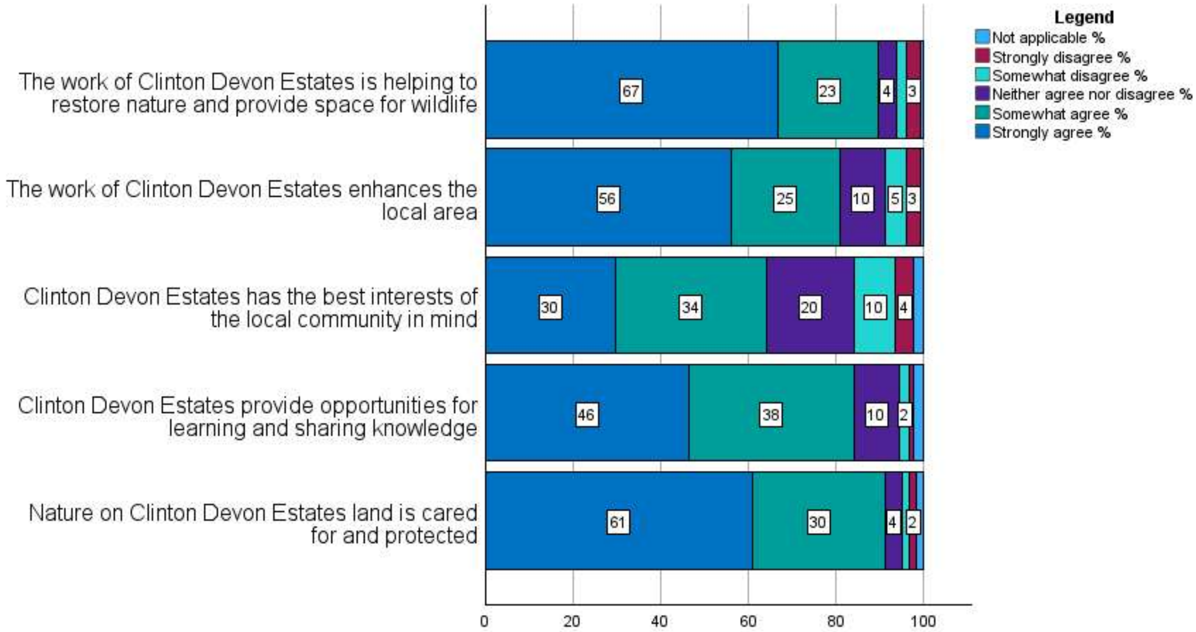

Figure 5. 1: Stakeholder views on how well Clinton Devon Estates carries out its goals, percentage agree/disagree

Tenants and leisure visitors were also asked specifically about their satisfaction with the Estate as a place to live, farm, visit or conduct business. Figure 5.2 provides an overview of stakeholder responses to this question.

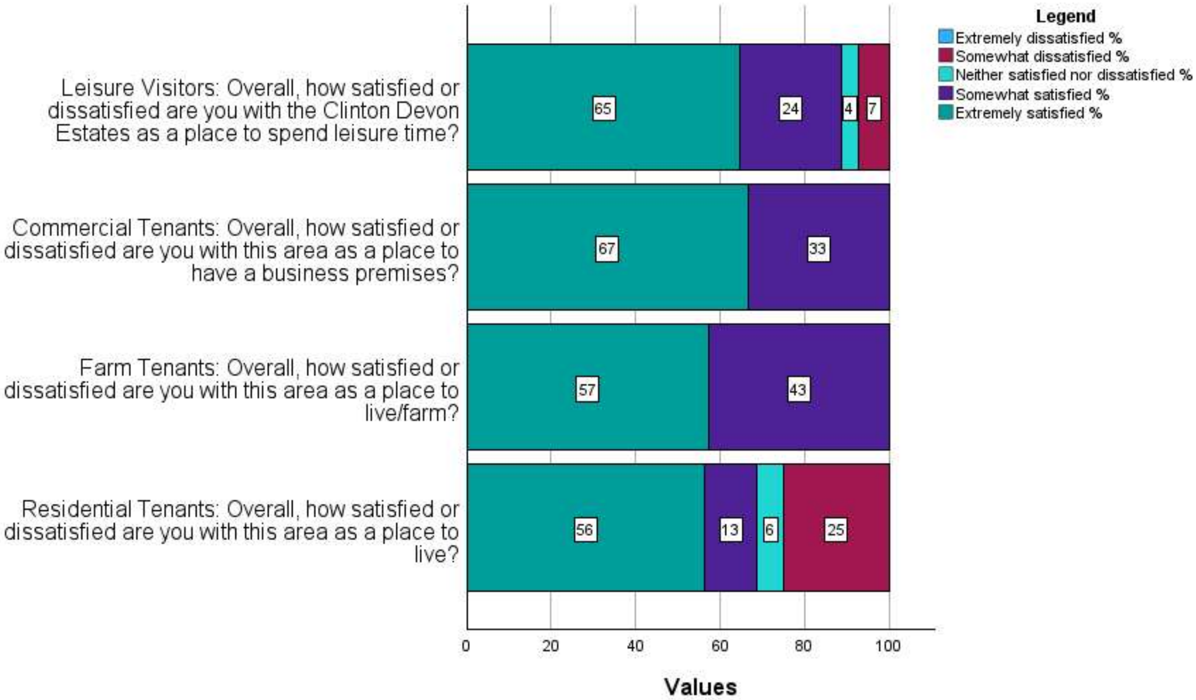

Figure 5. 2: Tenant and leisure visitor place-based satisfaction, percentage satisfied/dissatisfied

Stakeholders who took part in interviews were also overwhelmingly positive about the Estate's efforts to carry out its place-based goals. Stakeholders universally praised the Estate's efforts to restore nature and work with partners to deliver landscape-scale projects.

"They communicate openly. They are very collaborative in that respect. I think they do a great job. I think that they provide information about what they are planning in these areas. So I think I have a great deal of praise for all the work they do in the areas around … LORP, around Heaths to Seas, around Pebblebed Heaths and so forth. I have nothing but praise and positivity around all aspects of that." #Community6

Balancing nature and development in place

#StrategicPartner1 and #StrategicPartner2 have worked closely with the Estate over a number of years to deliver new commercial and housing developments. Both #StrategicPartner1 and #StrategicPartner2 pointed to the Estate's sensitivity to balancing the needs of nature, community access, productive land-use and other economic opportunities in a way which is not always understood by outside observers.

"Sometimes the perception is that the Estate are doing things for their own interests. Which is actually probably fair enough, but it's seen as being a negative thing. Developers are criticised for making a profit. Yeah, but if they didn't make a profit there wouldn't be development and you wouldn't get housing. You've got to accept that those things are part of the reality of the Estate actually managing the land [they've] got to be financially viable." #StrategicPartner2

For #StrategicPartner1 the Estate's commitment to stewardship and long-term commitment to the places in which they brought forward development results in quality developments which sets them apart from typical developers.

"They're interested in their legacy position. They know they're going to be associated with that scheme forever … fundamentally they've got an eye on quality… Because they're going to be around for hundreds of years… and I've worked with countless developers, developers of all stripes, you see in the starting point is well, we've got to get a certain amount of development out of this, but [the Estate] can take a more proactive view. About the form, quality and mixture [of] development they have… It's going to be more sympathetic and more reflective of local character and will include things that other developers would want to suppress." #StrategicPartner1

Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) and stakeholder views

Respondents to the Stakeholder Survey particularly praised the Estate's commitment to nature recovery with 13 respondents providing free text comments to this effect. The comment below from #StrategicPartner7 is illustrative of this sentiment.

"Ambition and drive on LORP is particularly commendable - unquestionably one of the most profound interventions for nature in Devon this decade." #StrategicPartner7

Strategic Partners in particular praised the leadership and foresight the Estate demonstrated on the issue. #StrategicPartner5 challenged the narrative that projects like LORP were simply a way for estates like Clinton Devon to access public funding, pointing to the social value generated as a result of the project regardless of which organisation took a leadership role. #StrategicPartner5 on this:

"If you take the Lower Otter Restoration Project as an example… obviously the EA drove that forward, but Clinton Devon, if they hadn't have agreed to that and pushed that forward and invested a lot of time and effort themselves, it wouldn't have happened. We'd be just sitting waiting for a big winter storm to reorganise that whole lower catchment catastrophically and chaotically and cause all manner of misery." #StrategicPartner5

As noted in section 5.5 LORP was a challenging project for the Estate to administer, with public engagement on the issue particularly challenging. As #Community6 recalls, at the time, the wider community was deeply divided about the merits of the project.

"And interestingly enough, if you think about the Lower Otter Restoration Project … Back in the day when that was being approved, [Organisation] came out in favour of that and immediately lost about 30% of their membership as a result of the Marmite nature of the project." #Community6

#Community6 and #Community1 reflected on the changing perception of the LORP project and pointed to the widespread community approval of, and pride in the project now that it is complete. This comment from #Community7 below perhaps best encapsulates this turbulent journey for the Estate as they successfully navigated the project to its completion.

"I feel strongly that Clinton Devon Estates made their mind up about the changes in the Otter Estuary and only paid lip service to the public consultation. That said, the outcome appears to be working well." #Community7

Heaths to Sea Landscape Recovery Project

Stakeholders in general were enthusiastic about and supportive of the Estate's efforts to design and seek Defra approval for the Heaths to Sea landscape recovery project, which they recognised as part of an ongoing commitment to nature recovery work in this part of East Devon. #StrategicPartner9 on this:

"I have been impressed with willingness to take on and/or buy into large scale, future-thinking environmental resilience projects, more so than is perhaps usual. For example, partnering in the River Otter Beaver Trial, leading the Lower Otter Restoration Project, and developing Heaths to Sea are exciting examples." #StrategicPartner9

#StrategicPartner2 and #StrategicPartner6 picked up on the issues mentioned in section 5.5 around developing a diversified income model to support the Heaths to Sea project. Strategic Partners, in particular, were sympathetic to some of the challenges facing the Estate in bringing in development opportunities to support the wider aims of the project. StrategicPartner6 on this:

"They're going to have to diversify income because they can't rely on DEFRA funding. Private finance has to come in. It's not going to be sufficient. I think amongst the group and the amongst the wider partnership, there's a complete awareness of the fact that they're going have to start exploring different financial income streams." #StrategicPartner6

On the specific issue of supporting a planning application for a tourism diversification enterprise on a tenant farm where income from agriculture would be impacted by supporting the ambitions within the H2C project, strategic partners were sympathetic. #StrategicPartner6 suggested perhaps there wasn't sufficient communication around the importance of this proposal to H2C and the project's overall viability.

"They don't need to tell specifics to people, not by any means. You know, that's their business in a way. But for a project as big as a landscape recovery [project] and for as long term, if something like that's happening and it's in direct support of the business planning around the project, then I think better communication around that's quite important. So that you know we get the best outcomes really for the landscape." #StrategicPartner6

However, #StrategicPartner2 also pointed to systemic challenges within the planning process which made taking the wider benefits of H2C into account difficult for members weighing up the planning decision. #StrategicPartner2 on this:

"It would be you know diversifying the farm, it would be kind of making sure there's more income coming into the farm at the Estate ... that's great, but the policy doesn't necessarily recognise those other benefits. And then that's quite difficult to manage, even if we agree with the broader principle… unfortunately the planning process… [that] theoretical example of converting some

barns into holiday accommodation, that can be part of the way the project is described in the public engagement and the planning application... But the policy would still say, you know, all their combinations, location, you know, [it] isn't really supported." #StrategicPartner2

Community stakeholders were concerned about planning proposals for development sites put forward, particularly in the National Landscape, and often contrasted these proposals with the ambitions of the H2C project. For community stakeholders Estate development activities and nature restoration activities were not always viewed as discrete projects, particularly if they occurred in adjacent geographies. #Community6 pointed specifically to a larger proposal for a new housing development. For this stakeholder, place and scale played an important role in their dissatisfaction with this particular proposal.

"So, on the one hand, they've got great positives in terms of the work they do around nature and conservation. But on the other hand, offering up a site inside a national landscape, which should be a sacrosanct area, in my opinion, is contravening that... And all that does is it undermines public confidence in what they are doing." #Community6

#Community6 was not the only stakeholder who raised concerns about housing development. Of the survey respondents, 5 mentioned what they saw as the tension between the Estate making space for nature and bringing forward sites for development. #Community8's comment is illustrative of this perception:

"On the one hand they say they are enhancing wildlife, protecting areas - but its only as mitigation for areas of land sold for development." #Community8

These perspectives from the Estate's stakeholders point to the thorny challenges for the Estate of realising their landscape scale ambitions, dependent as these are on viable project funding models, local planning processes and community support. These issues will continue to be explored in Chapter 6 – Supporting Communities.

5.7 Social value of placeshaping activities

Providing affordable housing

Three separate calculations were combined to indicate the social value generated by the provision of affordable housing through the Estate's housing development activities. The social value calculations are based on the assumption that moving to an affordable home represents a transition from lower quality, rented accommodation to ownership (with mortgage) of a higher quality property. The figures are based on Clinton Devon Estates estimates of the number of affordable homes delivered over the last ten years, averaged to an annual figure.

A financial proxy of £910 (2019 prices) was created to represent the life satisfaction impact of moving to a property with increased access to greenspace. This figure was adjusted for inflation. A 0.2 attribution was applied to account for the widespread number of SW properties with access to greenspace, suggesting that those moving to affordable homes may experience no significant change in greenspace access – see Technical Annex B.

A financial proxy of £8,190 (2019 prices) was created to represent the life satisfaction impact of moving from a rented property to home ownership (with mortgage). This was adjusted for inflation and a 0.5 attribution added to account for other factors – see Technical Annex B.

Published research suggests an average saving of £2,373 (2019 prices) to the public sector, per improved quality home. This figure was adjusted for inflation and an attribution factor was applied for 2023/24 and 2024/25 based on the proportion of properties in the SW in these years without an EPC rating – see Technical Annex B.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of these calculations for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Social value calculation	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift		
Moving to a property with increased proximity to greenspace	£6,587	£6,664
Moving to home ownership from rented	£119,386	£120,400
Public sector financial impact		
Saving to society, improved quality home	£15,580	£11,148

Table 5. 1: Social value generated, affordable homes built by the Estate (10 year average)

The Estate also provided data on the number of affordable homes expected to be delivered within future housing developments (where planning permission has been approved). Using the same methodology outlined above and detailed in Technical Annex B, an estimate of the potential social value generated through future housing developments has been made in table 5.2.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift	
Moving to a property with increased proximity to greenspace	£26,346
Moving to home ownership from rented	£476,002
Public sector financial impact	
Saving to society, improved quality home	£44,073

Table 5. 2: Potential social value, future affordable homes (planning permission granted)

Providing access to greenspace

Building on previous research conducted in partnership with the Estate which explored the health and wellbeing value of the Pebblebed Heaths (Petersen, 2019), the University of Exeter's ORVal tool was used to generate a recreational welfare value for the access to greenspace provided across Clinton Devon Estates land holdings – see Technical Annex B for more information.

Table 5.3 provides a summary of the recreational value provided across the Estate's landholdings as estimated through the ORVal tool.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Revealed preference method (ORVal)	
Recreational welfare value (whole Estate)	£10,851,112

Table 5. 3: Recreational welfare value access to greenspace across Clinton Devon Estates

6. Supporting communities, involvement and access

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 – Placeshaping, we examined the Estate's approach to commercial, residential and landscape scale development and explored the extent to which the Estate's organisational values influence their approach to strategic placeshaping activity. In this Chapter, we turn to the Estate's activity to support local communities, in particular, looking at the Estate's approach to managing its residential lettings portfolio and the way in which the Estate invites local communities to enjoy and engage with its greenspace. We also explore the Estate's approach to involving local communities in landscape-scale projects and developments. The views and experiences of the Estate's residential tenants and leisure visitors are explored in section 6.6, and the experiences of different stakeholder groups drawn out. Finally, estimates of the Estate's contributions to generating social value within this theme are made at section 6.7.

6.2 Managing a historic residential lettings portfolio

The Clinton Devon Estate has a long history of letting residential properties to local residents. The majority of the portfolio are historic properties, many of which originate from property development activity by Mark Rolle in the 1880s. Many of these properties were originally Estate cottages for employees and some tenancies are still retained by former Clinton Devon employees, who are now pensioners and pay nil rent (2% of tenants in 2025). A number of current Estate employees also rent properties from the Estate (5% of tenants in 2025). While the Estate, has long committed to providing rental properties to local people, as noted in Chapter 1, increasing regulatory obligations surrounding rental properties and increasing the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of those properties, presents a significant viability risk to landlords with historic property portfolios.

Of the Estate's residential lettings portfolio, 22% of the houses are listed properties and 99% of the properties are historic, with only four properties built after 2010. These historic properties present significant challenges in terms of raising the energy efficiency ratings, installing insulation or double glazing, for example. As #Trustee1 points out some of the measures needed to improve these properties may not be possible nor financially viable.

"We had more rented property in the old days. Every rural estate will tell you that Government has over many years made it harder and harder to continue providing old-fashioned but still desirable residential property for letting ... Estate owners have increasingly sold such property, not primarily in order to raise capital and invest it elsewhere, but because the cost of meeting the regulatory obligations which now imposed on landlords (but not on owner-occupiers) has gradually made letting unsustainable. We have a frantic shortage of rentable property, and yet public policy often seems to be aimed at aggravating it, rather than solving it." #Trustee1

While the Estate has been working to improve EPC ratings within its lettings portfolio, increasing the number of properties with an EPC rating of E or above by 93% since 2023/24, 16% of the portfolio retained an EPC rating below E in 2025/26. Increasingly, research points to the EPC ratings framework being poorly designed for historic properties, unable to recognise the importance of historic property maintenance and low-intervention retrofitting options (e.g. secondary glazing, improved loft insulation) on the energy efficiency performance of historic homes (Serck, 2026). Clinton Devon Estate employees remain hopeful that Government will revise the requirements for EPC certificates for historic properties.

On average from 2022/23 to 2024/25 the repairs bill for the Estate's residential lettings portfolio represented 64% of rental income. As #Employee6 explains, the ongoing maintenance costs of historic properties means the returns across the portfolio are low.

If you had the same number of houses that we have that are rented out that were built in the last 10 years, then your repairs bill's going to be significantly less than ours is on houses that are hundreds of years old. So whilst you're charging market rate, your repairs bill is still going to be significantly higher. So we're never going to have huge returns on our residential lettings portfolio. #Employee6

As a result of this increasingly stringent operating context for residential landlords, the Estate has recently increased some rents for residential tenants to align with market rates. This recent rental uplift has been challenging for the Estate's tenants, as we shall pick up again in section 6.7.

6.3 Supporting residential tenants

Providing homes to local families is an important principle for the Estate's residential lettings portfolio, as detailed in the Estate's 2030 strategy. #Employee4 on this:

"It's about giving people a sense of place and a home …in terms of how we let our properties our focus is on where we can [let to] local families, trying to keep young local families in the villages because if we do that we support our schools and shops and other amenities - thriving communities." #Employee4

As we saw in Chapter 1, low average wages, poor transport connectivity and expensive per capita utility costs all contribute to overall cost of living challenges for Devon's rural residents. The Estate is happy to enter into rental agreements with tenants in receipt of Universal Credit or other social housing benefits, which is not always the case with private landlords. The Estate works with the Local Authority to accommodate referrals from their housing team where possible. The management team recognises that regardless of the circumstances in which someone is in when they begin their rental agreement with the Estate, circumstances can change, as #Employee4 explains:

"And we can have tenants who come in with fully paid jobs and perfectly OK and then their health can change, or their relationship breaks down, and you can be in a really difficult position and I see the role of the Estate as partially to be there to be able to pick up people who need to remain within their communities, for the stability of their family… We are long time landlords and I think there's the understanding that the long-term relationships within the community are really important." #Employee4

Currently, the Estate has a small number of tenants who are struggling to meet rent payments. For the management team, it is important to work with these tenants and negotiate payment plans, rather than pursue eviction proceedings, where the costs of going to court would outweigh any rent recovered. The Estate provides ongoing support to tenants who may be struggling or have experienced a change in circumstances, to access the support they are entitled to and help them stay in their homes.

"So we'll have payment plans … our property manager has come from the public sector and … she is able to help and guide tenants where she can to Universal Credit and other social housing sort of payments and [is] very happy to sit and do paperwork with you. And it can be a lot, very labyrinth. So just understanding where these gateways and putting people in the right contact with the right people." #Employee4

However, there will be very rare circumstances where the Estate does pursue eviction of tenants after exhausting other avenues to offer help and support. The Social Value of supporting tenants to avoid eviction, as well as the potential costs to society of pursuing eviction will be explored in greater detail in section 6.7.

6.4 Community access and engagement

The Estate is committed to providing community access to high-quality greenspace for leisure and wellbeing. Public access to Clinton Devon Estate land is provided via a combination of 1,000 hectares of open access heathland, 500 hectares of woodland, and 14km of permissive rights of way linking 160km of footpaths (Clinton Devon Estates, 2026a). This access provides opportunities for visitors to spent time in nature and exercise, facilitated by thirteen car parks maintained by the Estate. The Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust team and members of the Clinton Devon Estate team also run regular talks, guided walks and events to support greenspace access. Annual events such as Heaths Week or Open Farm Sunday, also provide opportunities for different members of the community to engage in special events within the boundaries of the Estate. Additional funding from the Conservation Trust and the National Lottery Heritage fund to run the Pebblebeds for All programme has recently enabled the team to do more to invite underserved populations to make use of the greenspace on offer and access the associated health and wellbeing benefits. #Employee1 on this.

"[We're] trying to kind of increase our engagement offer and trying to look who is it that isn't making full advantage of the heaths, [evidence suggests] women on the whole have less access for various reasons and it's trying to work with these groups to sort of work out how can we improve that and what are the blockers to people coming out and enjoying it? And how do you get more young people and youth range of schemes? We've always wanted to do that. We just had no capacity." #Employee1

The Estate also provides access to open spaces for hobby groups and other community uses. This can either be through the provision of allotments, permissions for groups to organise from common land or rental agreements for small land parcels. When making decisions about licensing or renting land for these purposes the Estate weighs up the social good provided by providing the space, the potential environmental impacts of the activities and any conflicts of interest between different user groups. #Employee1 talks through how a request to access land might be weighed up against environmental concerns:

"I mean if there's no good reason to say no, we don't say no. [But say] we had a group that wanted to do [I don't know] radio control boating on all the ponds of Blackhill quarry. It's just like, Oh not really. Because that [is] an amazing wildlife area." #Employee1

Where possible, the Estate makes every effort to accommodate different special interest user groups. These groups include for example: forest schools, running groups, radio control clubs and the Ministry of Defence, who use the Pebblebed Heaths for training exercises. Conservation interest groups and citizen scientists access the Estate to monitor and record biodiversity, often in collaboration with the Estate team (more on this in Chapter 7). However, #Employee2 provides an example of where supporting special interest groups to access Estate land is not always straightforward.

"Mountain bikers is an ongoing thing, and being a mountain biker it's an interesting one. But we have a liability as soon as structures are built in the woods. Knock them down with the digger and then they're rebuilt, you know, a week or two later. I guess that's an interaction with a user group, which is challenging. I know there's been a lot of effort in the past into them forming a cooperative or something and getting insurance and things, but they've never managed to do it, so the Estate has tried to make it work." #Employee2

Enabling access to Estate land can incur costs to the Estate which are not always recoverable via licensing or rental agreements, as the example above shows. #Employee2 also points out that the Estate, like many other landowners, also deals with issues around litter, dog fouling and flytipping.

"We deal with quite a lot of flytipping, probably more so in the forestry team, reserves too, but that's … a big cost." #Employee2

Section 6.7 provides more information about the social valuation estimates associated with some of these community engagement and involvement activities, as well as the social value of maintaining clean, litter-free open access environments.

6.5 Placeshaping and community involvement

As we saw in Chapter 5, the Estate's delivery of residential, commercial and landscape scale development projects has invited community involvement in the Estate's activities via the planning process. We saw in Chapter 5 that local residents could express dissatisfaction with the Estate's approach to putting forward sites for development. The Estate team were conscious of the impact to the community of their activities, #Employee1 on this:

"We are a large landowner in this area so there's lots of people that live on the same land. So what we do affects them and you've got to be quite conscious [of that]… You are large and have a lot of clout and a lot of agency, and they have teeny tiny voice." #Employee1

The Estate's increasing delivery of large, impactful partnership projects such as the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) and Heaths to Sea has propelled the Estate to engage with the local community in different ways, over and above the traditional mechanisms provided through the planning process. For John Varley, this community involvement activity is a natural continuation of the Estate's traditional values.

"And that's the whole thing about co-creation, involvement, communities, listening, and all the rest of it. So the point about values is it's about doing things where, afterwards, you can look at the whole world in the face. And that hasn't changed from the 18th Century to today." John Varley, CEO

Reflecting on the experiences of delivering LORP, John Varley spoke about the difficulties of conducting genuine co-creation. The Estate seeks to balance agile decision making with opportunities for collaboration and genuine community involvement within placeshaping projects such as LORP. John explains:

"It's hard work... the Lower River Otter project was again trench fighting. And it took a long time. And it was co-creation. Well, was it co-creation?... None of it would ever get done if you followed the handbook of co-creation. But we consulted and we involved local communities and parish councillors in unusual ways... We actually devolved the leadership of some of these working groups to people who actually objected against various aspects of what we were about. How dangerous was that? But then at the end of it, look at what has been achieved" John Varley, CEO

As we saw in Chapters 3 and 5, this openness towards engagement with a range of stakeholders enabled the Estate to build new relationships and gradually change public perceptions about the LORP project. These relationships and lessons learned through LORP co-creation and engagement activities have been taken forward as part of the preparatory work for the Heaths to Sea LRP proposal. The Estate has been running a series of community consultation and involvement events for Heaths to Sea, attracting over 700 attendees over the course of 2024/25.

6.6 Stakeholder views on support for community

Residential tenants

There was a reasonable response from residential tenants to the stakeholder survey with 16 tenants providing complete responses (6% of residential tenant cohort). As Figure 6.1demonstrates, the residential tenants were the most polarised of the stakeholder groups who responded to the survey.

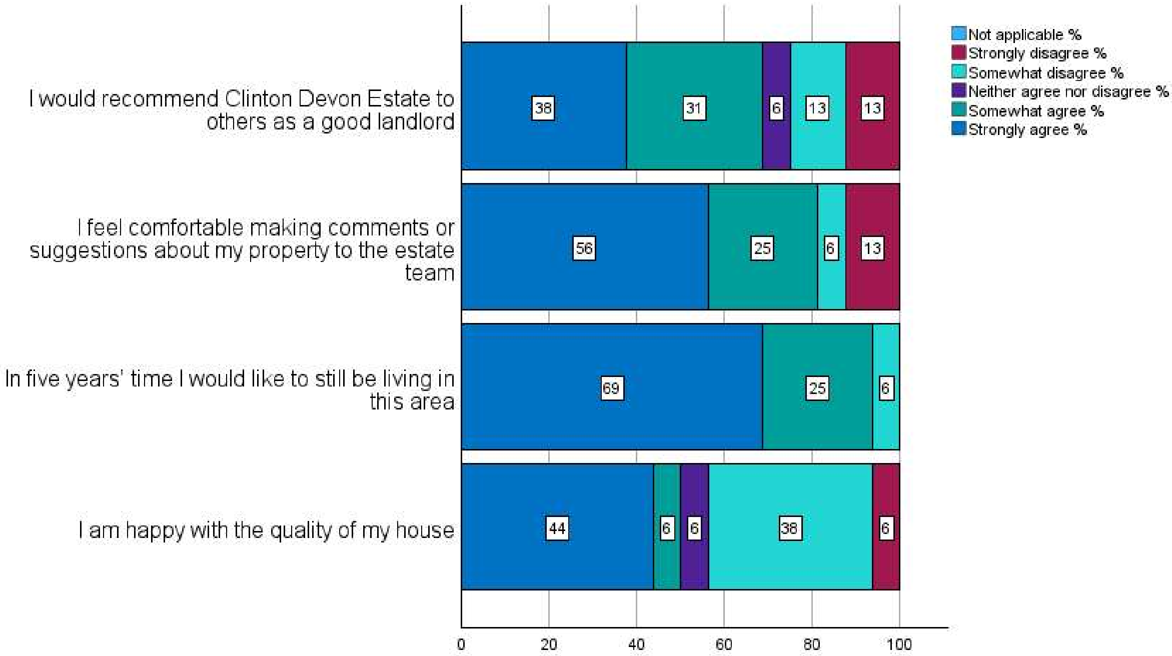

Figure 6. 1: Residential tenant responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements

The polarisation of residential tenant experiences was also evident in free text responses to the Stakeholder Survey. Overall, 6 of 16 residential tenants left positive comments about their relationship with the Estate and 7 of 16 residential tenants left negative comments. Positive comments included praise for the Estate's placeshaping role in the local area (2 of 16), satisfaction with footpaths and greenspace access (2 of 16) and praise for the Estate as a landlord (3 of 16). Examples of positive comments include:

"It is the most beautiful area that has been looked after by [Clinton Devon] for hundreds of years." #Tenant10

"As a tenant I am treated very much as an individual [and] not just 'another tenant'" #Tenant8

Issues raised by tenants completing the survey included: rent increases (4 of 16) and worries about the maintenance of the property (5 of 16), examples of these comments include:

"Rent increase are not suitable for Devon incomes and maintenance on North Devon properties needs improving." #Tenant3

"The older properties are poorly maintained." #Tenant7

Some concerns raised by residential tenants reflected wider societal trends that were not necessarily within the direct purview of the Estate to resolve, for example, worries about inward migration to rural areas or the loss of community infrastructure, such as shops or pubs.

Of the 16 residential tenants who responded to the survey, 4 expressed nostalgia for a past relationship with the Estate. These tenants made a clear distinction with a past-Estate which was 'for the locals' using language such as 'commercial', 'removed' or 'forgotten' to describe the contemporary relationship with the Estate. These comments echoed the observations in Chapter 4, which also highlighted how the Estate's growing professionalisation as an organisation could present a challenging transition for some of its longer-term stakeholders.

"Now the estate residents are just a number and we might as well rent off an estate agent." #Tenant5

"Also stopped shooting on estate that provided employment and volunteers to be feel part of community by beating in the estate." #Tenant6

In contrast, it is notable that where residential tenants expressed high satisfaction with Clinton Devon Estates as a landlord, they could name specific employees in the residential team with whom they had a good relationship, demonstrating the value of these interpersonal relationships in building tenant satisfaction.

"I always have a good experience dealing with the property team - especially [Clinton Devon employee]." #Tenant1

"I cannot praise the residential team highly enough… we have a great relationship [Clinton Devon employee] from residential team she is absolutely fantastic." #Tenant2

Leisure and recreation visitors to the Estate

In total 62 respondents to the Stakeholder Survey suggested that they visited the Estate for leisure, including walking, exercising or attending events. Figure 6.2 provides an overview of leisure visitor responses to a selection of statements about spending time in nature on the Estate.

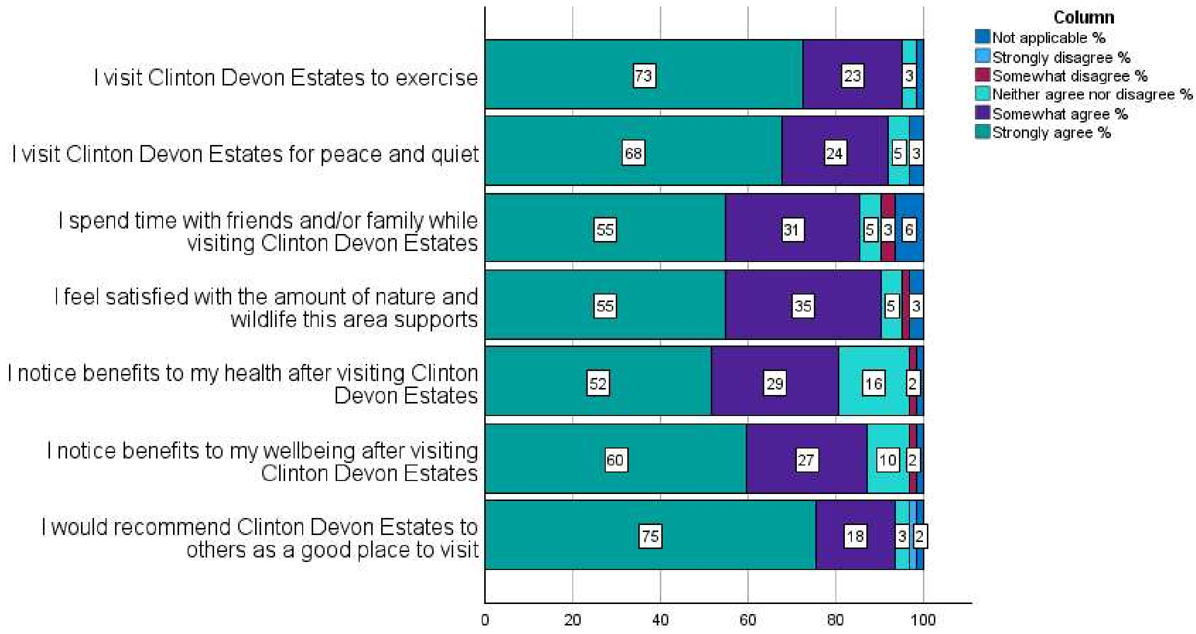

Figure 6. 2: Leisure visitor responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements

Free text comments from leisure visitors covered a range of themes, the most common themes included: praise for greenspace access (7 respondents); worries about development or transparency of future plans (5 respondents); worries about the impact of agricultural activity (4 respondents) and complaints about other greenspace users, e.g. dog fouling (4 respondents).

Survey and interview participants were enthusiastic in their praise for the greenspace they were able to access on Clinton Devon Estates. Some examples of these types of comment include:

"But yeah, I really enjoy the fact that I've got this, this area, this untouched area, it's accessible to me and to my family. And it's very close by us basically. It's like [the] lungs of Exmouth, if you like." #Community4

"Well maintained carparks and access as well as beautiful managed countryside with lots of nature, great place for leisure and children to enjoy." #Community10

"I don't really engage with the organisation of [Clinton Devon] but I do love walking across Aylesbeare and Woodbury Commons, the Otter valley and places in between. Grateful to [Clinton Devon] for enabling access to these wonderful areas." #Community12

Some respondents were explicit about the benefits they gained from accessing greenspace on the Estate. In common with the responses to the multiple choice questions as detailed in Figure 6.2, respondents pointed specifically to the wellbeing benefits of being able to access greenspace on the Estate.

"I can have had a really bad morning... And just being able to take the dog up there for 45 minutes, turn off, recalibrate, almost empty my head, basically, just allows me to do that reset before I come back to work. So yes, on that level, mental health, really powerful. #Community4

"The estates are such an important resource for my wellbeing and help me feel connected to the landscape and local area." #Community11

Other respondents pointed out the impact of the LORP project helping to make greenspace more accessible to a wider range of people with different abilities.

"I mean, every time we go down there, there's always people, you never on your own for very long down there. It's very popular, especially now that, let's say, it's a lot more accessible." #Community3

"It's really admirable and given the population of Budleigh Salterton, and there's a lot of elderly and disabled people, again it just opens up access in, makes the place possible. So I feel like they sort of put their money where their mouth is, so it shows they mean what they say." #Community9

A subset of leisure visitor respondents had a closer relationship with the Clinton Devon Estates and Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust teams through attending walks, talks or events on the Pebblebed Heaths or other areas of the Estate. Participants who spoke on this were full of praise for the employees running the engagement events and suggested there would be appetite for more similar events from the local community.

"But the Lower Otter Sunday morning 2 hour ranger walk is brilliant, but the last three I tried to get on and they're always fully booked... We have a population of people who [would] love to get out and see what Clinton Devon were doing. So if we had more opportunities to do that, there'd be more interaction for them." #Community1

Participants who had closer ties to the Estate through attending events or walks, also noticed and praised the efforts of the Clinton Devon Estates and Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust teams to deal with litter, flytipping and other issues on open access land.

"So they've transformed the land, the use of the land and [the way] they approached people. [Employees] do amazing work in terms of working with the dog walkers and their waggy walks and all of that kind of stuff. And it's sometimes working against people because people ... drop all their litter and fly tip and dogs mess and stuff, but they persevere and they deal with those difficult people and through education and trying to collaborate with people, which is incredible because it's tough." #Community2

Thinking about the Estate's approach to greenspace access at a more fundamental level, some stakeholders with close ties to the Estate suggested that the Estate offered an ethos of inclusivity and accessibility that was rare and valued. #StrategicPartner4 on this:

"They don't get in the way of people, really. You know, people can, I think, feel the freedom. They don't feel that somebody's breathing down their neck.'" #StrategicPartner4

#Community1 also valued the Estate's approach to allowing access on their land. This stakeholder often organises biodiversity walks for a local community group and commented that neighbouring landowners to Clinton Devon are often wary of allowing self-organised groups to access their land, despite it being open access, or wish to charge community groups like this a fee.

"…Clinton Devon are so much better… We were having one of our Sunday walks around there and we got an e-mail from [another large landowner] saying: 'we see you're holding an event on our land. You haven't asked permission.'" #Community1

6.7 Social value of supporting communities

Supporting at risk tenants to avoid eviction

Published research was used to determine the average financial impact to the public sector of: 1) a preventative intervention to support a person at risk of homelessness, £2,426 (2015 prices); 2) the costs of ongoing crisis interventions to support a person experiencing ongoing homelessness, £5,787.25 (2015 prices). These financial proxies were adjusted for inflation. See Technical Annex B for more information.

Published Government statistics suggest the cost to England's Local Authorities of providing Temporary Accommodation in 2024 and 2025. Combined with statistics which estimate the number of households living in temporary accommodation, this provided a per-household financial proxy of £18,248.18 (2024) and £21,400.02 (2025). See Technical Annex B for more information.

Research which explored the difference in life satisfaction reported by those living in temporary accommodation and those living in social housing was used to create two financial proxies for adults £11,297 (2019 prices) and children £13,130 (2019 prices) – see Technical Annex B.

Clinton Devon Estates estimates of tenant households at risk of eviction were used to estimate the impact of evictions avoided – see table 6.1.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Public sector financial impact	
Saving to society, cost of preventative intervention	£3,876
Saving to society, cost persistent homeless interventions	£6,517
Saving to society, temporary accommodation	£42,800
Wellbeing uplift	
Difference in wellbeing, social housing and temporary housing, adult	£42,564
Difference in wellbeing, social housing and temporary housing, child	£39,576
Total savings to society, eviction of at-risk tenants avoided	**£135,334**

Table 6. 1: Social value calculations - impact of evictions avoided

Known data from Clinton Devon Estates about the number of households evicted during the study period was used to estimate the potential costs to society associated with this eviction – see table 6.2.

Note – this example is illustrative and reflects the possible costs to society of eviction of tenants, not the known outcome for tenants following eviction proceedings. See Technical Annex B for more information.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Public sector financial impact	
Cost to society, persistent homeless scenario	-£3,258
Cost to society, temporary accommodation	-£21,400
Wellbeing impact	
Difference in wellbeing, social housing and temporary housing, adult	-£21,282
Difference in wellbeing, social housing and temporary housing, child	-£19,788
Total cost to society, eviction	**-£65,729**

Table 6. 2: Social value calculations – impact of eviction

Tenant satisfaction with landlord

A financial proxy of £5,460 (2019 prices) was created to represent the life satisfaction impact of moving from a property (social renter) to a property rented from a private landlord. This was adjusted for inflation and a baseline attribution of 0.5 applied. An additional attribution factor was created based on distributional analysis of residential tenant responses to the employee survey, in which 69% of residential tenants were positive about their experiences with the Estate as landlord and 25% negative – see Technical Annex B.

Table 6.3 provides an indication of the Estate's net social value contribution as a landlord, on the basis of this distributional analysis.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift	
Dissatisfied tenants	-£43,715
Satisfied tenants	£341,853
Net social value	**£298,137**

Table 6. 3: Social value calculation - satisfaction with landlord, distributional analysis

Two sub-cohorts of employee-tenants and non-employee tenants were created to conduct an alternative analysis of the social value of Clinton Devon Estate's residential lettings. Research indicates that tenants for whom their landlord is also their employer report higher life satisfaction, than those renting from a private landlord. This evidence suggests a life satisfaction impact of £8,840 (2019 prices) for tenants renting from their employer. This was adjusted for inflation and a baseline attribution of 0.5 applied. An additional attribution was applied based on the findings of the Stakeholder Survey – see Technical Annex B. See the summary of this analysis in Table 6.4.

Social value calculation	2024/25
Wellbeing uplift	
Rest of residential tenant cohort satisfaction with landlord	£238,839
Employee satisfaction with employer as residential landlord	£51,910

Table 6. 4: Social value calculation – satisfaction with landlord, analysis by tenant type

Providing improved housing

Published research suggests an average saving of £2,373 (2019 prices) to the public sector, per improved quality home. This figure was adjusted for inflation. Quality homes in this context can be understood to be those with an EPC rating of E or above. Actual data from Clinton Devon Estates was used to understand the number of homes improved in 2023/24 and 2024/25. For the remaining homes below an EPC E, stakeholder responses to the survey question 'I am happy with the quality of my home' was used to attribute at-risk properties within the unimproved portfolio – see Technical Annex B.

Table 6.5 suggests the net social value of improvements to the property portfolio.

Social value calculation	2023/24	2024/25
Public sector financial impact		
Risks to society, unimproved homes	-£113,410	-£42,464
Saving to society, improved homes	£285,736	£38,739
Net social value	**£172,325**	**-£3,725**

Table 6. 5: Social value calculation – costs to society of poor housing

Community engagement and involvement events

Research indicates a life satisfaction impact of 0.1 from participating in community events. This finding was used to calculate a financial proxy of £1,300 (2019 prices). This was adjusted for inflation and an attribution made on the basis of Estate information about the depth and quality of each engagement activity – See Technical Annex B.

Attendance data from the Estate for 2024/25 was used to create the social value calculation in table 6.6.

Social value calculation	2024/25
Wellbeing uplift	
Attending community events (cultural)	£3,240,194

Table 6. 6: Social value calculation – attendance at community events hosted by Clinton Devon or PHCT

Research which indicates a modest life satisfaction impact resulting from participation in civic involvement events, which was used to create a financial proxy of £702 (2019 prices). This was adjusted for inflation and a baseline attribution of 0.5 applied. An additional attribution of 0.8 was made to estimate the depth of the activity – See Technical Annex B.

Attendance data from the Estate for 2024/25 was used to create the social value calculation in table 6.7.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift	
Attending public engagement events	£250,036

Table 6. 7: Social value calculation – attendance at public engagement events hosted by Clinton Devon or PHCT

Dealing with flytipping

Two financial proxies were created to estimate the social value of the Estate dealing with flytipping within its boundaries. Published research suggests the value to individuals of flytipping removal and disposal (stated preference), this was used to create a per-person annual proxy of £44.52 (2013 prices). This was adjusted for inflation. Estimates of unique daily visitors in a high-volume area and a low volume area of the Estate, combined with good-quality estimates of flytipping incidents from the Estate woodland, reserves and agriculture teams were used to estimate impacted visitors. Published estimates of flytipping incidents in England, and costs of dealing with flytipping incidents were used to estimate the cost per incident borne by Local Authorities. This figure was also used to illustrate the savings to society of Clinton Devon Estates actions to deal with flytipping - see Technical Annex B.

The summary of these figures is included in Table 6.8.

Social valuation	**2024/25**
Stated preference	
Dealing with flytipping, value to the public	£93,251
Public sector financial impact	
Dealing with flytipping, value to public sector	£9,117

Table 6. 8: Social value calculation – dealing with flytipping

7. Thought leadership and knowledge generation

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, the Estate's approach to supporting, involving and engaging with the community within and surrounding the boundaries of the Estate was explored. We examined the challenges and priorities for the Estate through discussion with Clinton Devon employees, by reflecting on the views of stakeholders and by examining the social value generated through community support and engagement activities. In this Chapter, we turn to a more difficult-to-measure aspect of the Estate's activities. Again, through employee and stakeholder views, as well as social value calculations, we examine the ways in which the Estate's thought leadership role and commitment to knowledge generation has contributed to delivering wider benefits to society. Within this chapter we explore the Estate's role in making space for outdoor education, involving citizen scientists and working with academic, commercial and policy partners to create and disseminate best practice.

7.2 Openness, transparency and thought leadership

As we will see in section 7.8, the Estate's stakeholders – particularly their strategic partners – praised the Estate's thought leadership role and its ability to lead on, or contribute to, influential projects of wider benefit to society. To take on this role, the Estate has consciously made room for employees to devote time to contribute to projects, partnerships and other activities which build networks, knowledge and influence. John Varley on this:

"I've encouraged every employee, at whatever level, to go and do other things in their subject matter areas outside the Estate. That was a big shift, because the mindset was 'we can't afford the time'... I mean, it has some implications obviously. But it has other positive implications too. It brings commercial opportunities, partnership opportunities and horizon scanning. The implications are that the Estate has delivered multiples of what we would have delivered if we didn't have the outreach and we hadn't built those networks." John Varley, CEO

In response to the Estate's encouragement, members of the Clinton Devon team have contributed to a number of national boards and partnership projects over the period 2023/24 to 2024/25. These include, for example, being part of: DEFRA's Resilient Treescape Advisory Group, the Land Use for Net Zero Hub and Multifunctional Land Use Framework pilots. As #Employee6 notes, participating at this level does not necessarily bring short-term tangible benefits to Clinton Devon, however the Estate is prepared to support team members to make long term commitments to shaping and guiding policymaking through participation in these initiatives.

"We're involved in national discussions and without a great agenda. So, we're not involved in those national discussions because it's going to make an immediate difference to us. We're involved in those national discussions because we recognise the value to society of making sure that those conversations are right and fairly and accurately represented... policy is being written by people who have all the goodwill in the world. But it's not the same as the people that are experiencing it on the ground." #Employee6

Significantly, membership of DEFRA's National Estates for Nature group has given the Estate the opportunity to represent the experiences and challenges of managing a rural estate to policymakers at a national level. The Estate's membership of this group has invited some criticism from others in the rural estates' community. However, for John Varley, the benefits of contributing far outweigh any additional scrutiny the Estate might experience:

"And absolutely, it's all about getting outside your fortress. And in fact, listening to others. Sitting on that group, we're able to challenge policy. So, we have been challenging policy and learning a lot at the same time." John Varley, CEO

Committing to participating at this level has also required other institutional shifts. The Estate has had to become increasingly comfortable being open and transparent about organisational details that historically rural estates have kept largely private. #Employee1 on this:

"Because if you start to talk more about what you're doing, [being] more open, of course you're exposing your soft underbelly because people want to know more about you and ask how many assets you've got, how much money you're making. And I think we're able to think 'yeah, this isn't really a threat... we we've got to do this.' And now you know we're sending out shapefiles out [liberally and freely] to anybody." #Employee1

For the Estate being part of the conversation is not limited to taking part in activities on the national stage, but also means committing to local partnerships and initiatives on an ongoing basis. Over the period 2023/24 to 2024/25 Clinton Devon Estates has contributed to at least 12 local partnerships or boards including the East Devon National Landscape, the Devon Invasive Species Initiative and the East Devon Catchment Partnership, for example.

"I think just being engaged, I mean, I think just generally you know we do try and if somebody wants to speak to us about something, if there's any partnership we want to be there and helping and to be you know constructively be involved in it. You know there's no other [large estates] there... But it's just interesting... that's why I think in some ways we do more good stuff through that." #Employee1

Ongoing participation in local partnerships has enabled the Estate to support partner priorities and objectives and be agile in responding to opportunities. #Employee1 describes how they recently wrote a bid on behalf of a partnership, which will not result in any funding for the Estate. As #Employee1 says the benefit to the Estate is supporting the right environmental outcomes for the local area. However, regardless of which organisation leads on these funding opportunities, there is often a resource implication for the Estate which is rarely fully recouped through project budgets. #Employee1 on this:

"Which is fine. Yeah, it's the right thing. So you know [partner organisation] are in a better position to project manage it... Yeah, we've got to do all the bloody claims... which is quite demanding. But, none of these things are... However you do it, it is a cost. It is not an income." #Employee1

7.3 Supporting outdoor education

Clinton Devon Estate has an ongoing dedicated programme to deliver outdoor education opportunities for children and young people as well as talks, walks and events to support adult learning. One of the ways in which the Estate has been able to better support outdoor education over the last decade has been through employing a dedicated employee to expand the offer to local schools, tailor resources to the syllabus and build engagement and partnerships over a number of years.

"When I started, I suppose, you know, we might have had 3 or 4 primary school trips that I might have done on the heath, but ... [if you've] got somebody as an education professional, you can do an awful lot more. You can scale it up and make sure it is fitting the syllabus and it's fitting, you know, key stage 3 or whatever..." #Employee1

Employing a dedicated employee with an engagement and education brief also means that the Estate can use large scale projects such as LORP or Heaths to Sea as an opportunity to scale-up the existing offer to schools. During the LORP project, the Estate was able to double average annual capacity to support school groups on the Estate and a similar increase in capacity is anticipated if the Heaths to Sea project is approved for the delivery stage. Section 7.9 provides an illustration of the social value of both the existing and enhanced outdoor education offer the Estate is able to support.

Since 1992, the Estate has also worked with partner organisations such as FWAG SW to create and support the Kingfisher Award Scheme, which on average welcomed an additional 200 – 250 school children per annum to the Estate's home and tenant farms. After a break in recent years, the Kingfisher Award Scheme is returning in 2026 and will be providing opportunities for Devon school children to learn about nature on a number of partner farms.

Members of the Clinton Devon team also pointed to future opportunities to work more closely with neighbouring schools to deliver bespoke education opportunities to meet those schools' needs for their pupils. #Employee1 suggested ongoing support for a local specialist school for children with special educational needs and #Employee5 suggested an opportunity to work more closely with a local post-16 college. #Employee5 on this:

"We try and support [local post-16 college. They've] recently significantly reduced their own home farm dairy operations and we've been having conversations with them about whether they can potentially use our dairy as a learning resource for their students... some structured visits and maybe data sharing and those sort of things." #Employee5

7.4 Learning from data and citizen science

The Estate and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust work closely with volunteers who contribute significant time and energy to carry out conservation work, invasive species management, citizen science and archival work, as well as supporting the Estate with one-off events. These volunteering opportunities not only greatly benefit the Estate, but also provide wider environmental benefits, as well as supporting the wellbeing of those volunteering (more on this in section 7.9).

In recent years, the Estate have been working to develop their relationships with local citizen scientists and working to support more citizen science taking place on the Estate. As we saw in Chapter 3, the Estate has been partnering with local community organisations to encourage water quality monitoring along the River Otter, for example. Other citizen scientists carry out ecological and species monitoring on heathland, riparian areas and on tenant farms collecting valuable data to support understanding of the Estate's nature restoration efforts. The ELMs Test and Trial report described the citizen scientists operating in the vicinity of the Pebblebed Heaths and Lower Otter valley as an 'incredible and under-utilised' resource (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b, p. 5). Citizen scientists work with the Estate and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust to monitor heathland species such as nightjar, Dartford warbler and silver studded-blue butterflies. Others monitor wading bird numbers in the River Otter estuary or carry out surveys to monitor salmon and trout nest creation in riverbeds. A number of citizen scientists also work with farm tenants on the Estate to monitor winter and breeding bird numbers on tenant farms. Monitoring work by citizen scientists is fed back to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, which collates the records which the Estate can access. #Employee1 on this:

"We realise you know, we don't have all the data that we might like... there's not many landowners, or probably others, that will have a service level agreement with the Devon Biodiversity Record Centre, they hold all the data." #Employee1

However, as noted in the ELMs Test and Trial report supporting the valuable work of citizen scientists also places a significant administrative workload on the Estate to facilitate and manage data submissions on behalf of the citizen scientist volunteers (Clinton Devon Estates, 2021b). In addition, as #Employee1 notes, there is also additional effort required from the Estate to properly support its volunteers and ensure they feel valued and engaged:

"And there's about 80 or so volunteers and some do citizen science stuff and some will come out and do heathland management, which is great, but you know, even then it's a ... load of work... [and people] want to know that their work has been valued, they want be fed back on that and then we have an annual friends forum where people can say, well, you know what they [would] like to change." #Employee1

In addition to working with citizen scientists or research institutions, the Estate also conducts its own data gathering, monitoring and research activities. Some of this activity – carbon accounting, farm business data gathering – would be common to many organisations working within agriculture or forestry. However, the Estate is able to create space for employees to carry out additional research activities, in order to inform longer term planning and decision making.

"But as part of that ... I'd like to put in some monitoring plots. And some species trials and perhaps up the game with squirrel control, which is a massive limiting factor for planting ... broadleaf trees, certainly in the woodland context." #Employee2

7.5 Knowledge generation and contributions to research

During the period from 2023/24 to 2024/25 the Estate hosted nine separate research projects originating from four universities, as well as a research project originating from DEFRA and the Environment Agency. The Estate maintains a policy of supporting research projects wherever possible, as #Employee1 explains.

"You know if there is partnership working to be done, if there are projects, doesn't matter which university ... who want to do things, [we] just try and facilitate that. You know, if ... you've got an interesting project we very rarely, if ever, say no and just try and make sure that they're empowered to do that and that's good for us as well." #Employee1

The Clinton Devon Estates management team were positive about the benefits of accommodating research projects on the Estate and could give examples of historic or current projects of interest. These projects included projects on natural capital accounting (Holden, 2022); word fuel supply chains (Garzun Delvaux, 2011); wildfires; soil carbon; river sediment; and multiple projects exploring aspects of beaver reintroductions, for example.

"Facilitating research projects which are... actually quite beneficial. They take a bit of my time sometimes, but actually some of the data you get back from them is really interesting. So I don't see that as a burden or an issue, but there is an understanding that ... we do accommodate a lot of these things. So we're doing some work [with a University] about surface runoff and different cropping scenarios and things at the moment, which isn't particularly intrusive, but it's just something else to be mindful of." #Employee5

Research projects could vary in terms of the amount of time and employee investment needed from members of the Estate team to support and facilitate them. Some, like the example from #Employee5 above are unobtrusive, yet others require significant Estate employee time. #Employee1 pointed out that many research projects required access to tenanted farmland. While the Estate's farm tenants were also interested in and supportive of research taking place, the Estate are keen to manage to avoid overburdening tenants. #Employee1 on this:

"When you can, you [do] facilitate. There's times where it's not just some requests, but ... there's a map, and then there'll be health and safety, and there'll be risk assessments. And then I'm going to have to liaise with whoever's got land occupation. And then you end up being the middle person to check that there's no bulls in the field that day…."

"...Every time I've got to be there to contact the tenant because, we have a duty of care on them. With their tenancy, they should have quiet enjoyment without undue hassle basically from the landlord and everyone else... I don't want them to be hassling the tenants." #Employee1

7.6 Understanding the past to inform the future

In addition to working with the Devon Heritage Centre to preserve records from the Estate, the Estate maintains its own archive and employee archivist at the Rolle Estate Office. The archival records are drawn on by various Estate departments, to inform understanding of land boundaries, maintenance and repair of historic buildings or evidence of ancient woodland, for example. The archival record has also proved to be an unusual and engaging way to involve the local community groups in co-design of new residential developments, by identifying historic plans and maps to provide inspiration. John Varley on this:

"So for example, in [housing development] we actually sat down with [history groups and] helped co-design some of the properties and recreated avenues in Exmouth which were put in the 1800s."
John Varley, CEO

The Heaths to Sea LRP is one area where the Estate's archive has been able to add significant value to the plans for the project. The Estate's archival records, which contain detailed copies of tithe maps, historic tenancy agreements, letters, Estate accounts and land valuations, for example, have been able to provide information about past cropping, field boundaries and agricultural practices. Taken together, these records can assist the Heaths to Sea project team to understand what historic actions were taken by the Estate and its tenants during the era of Victorian high farming and how these might be reversed in order to restore a more natural flow of water across the landscape. One area in which the records have been particularly useful, for example, is in providing detailed information about drainage systems installed in the mid-nineteenth century, as #Employee3 explains:

"We've discovered a lot of drainage plans where you can see exactly where the drainage pipes have been laid in the fields to take the water off the fields. All of which is not evidence you can necessarily see on the land now. So unlike an archaeologist who is going out there and looking at the land first and then interpreting it, we're able to add in documents ... and then look at the land… All sorts of sort of things have emerged. So, I think it's quite unusual to have both an archivist and environmental employees who can kind of carry on this kind of work within an estate." #Employee3

The archival record has also proved to be a valuable way to engage the wider community in the consultation process for the Heaths to Sea project.

7.7 Stakeholder views on knowledge generation

Commercial and public sector strategic partners

Twenty stakeholders identified themselves as commercial or public sector strategic partners of Clinton Devon Estates. These stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with the Estate, as demonstrated at figure 7.1.

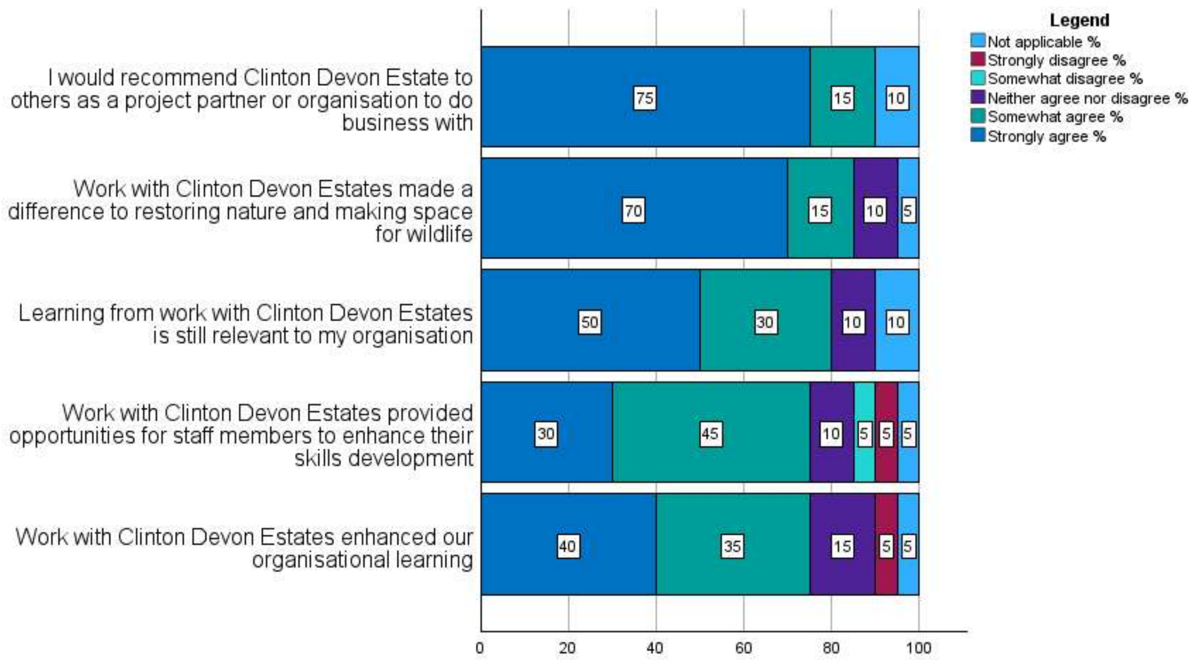

Figure 7. 1: Project partner responses, percentage agree/disagree

Free text comments from commercial and public sector project partners to the Stakeholder Survey included praise for the Estate's role as thought leaders (4 responses) and approach to working in partnership (12 responses). Examples of these types of comment includes:

"Excellent leadership and good values." #StrategicPartner11

"The [Estate] have integrity and are experts in their respective fields - I have found it a positive experience to work with the estate." #StrategicPartner2

"[Clinton Devon] are leaders within their sector for conservation land management delivery. They do so as a trusted partner, willing to hold others to account in a fair manner." #StrategicPartner12

Suggestions for improvements the Estate could make to its approach to working in partnership included comments about: greater openness and transparency (2 responses); recognising the constraints and contributions of partners (2 responses); and desire for the Estate to drive even greater progress towards land-based ambitions (2 responses). Examples of these types of comment includes:

"In [Clinton Devon] commendably striving for excellence, sometimes this can be to the exclusion of others or the recognition of others." #StrategicPartner7

"…I would like to see them go further and faster, especially in areas such as land access - where they could be setting a strong example for responsible access for all, to ensure that the privilege of large land ownership is shared by all." #StrategicPartner5

There was a modest response from volunteers to the Stakeholder Survey, with 5 respondents identifying themselves as Clinton Devon Estate volunteers. Those volunteers were positive about their volunteering role and the benefits they experienced from regular volunteering (see Figure 7.2).

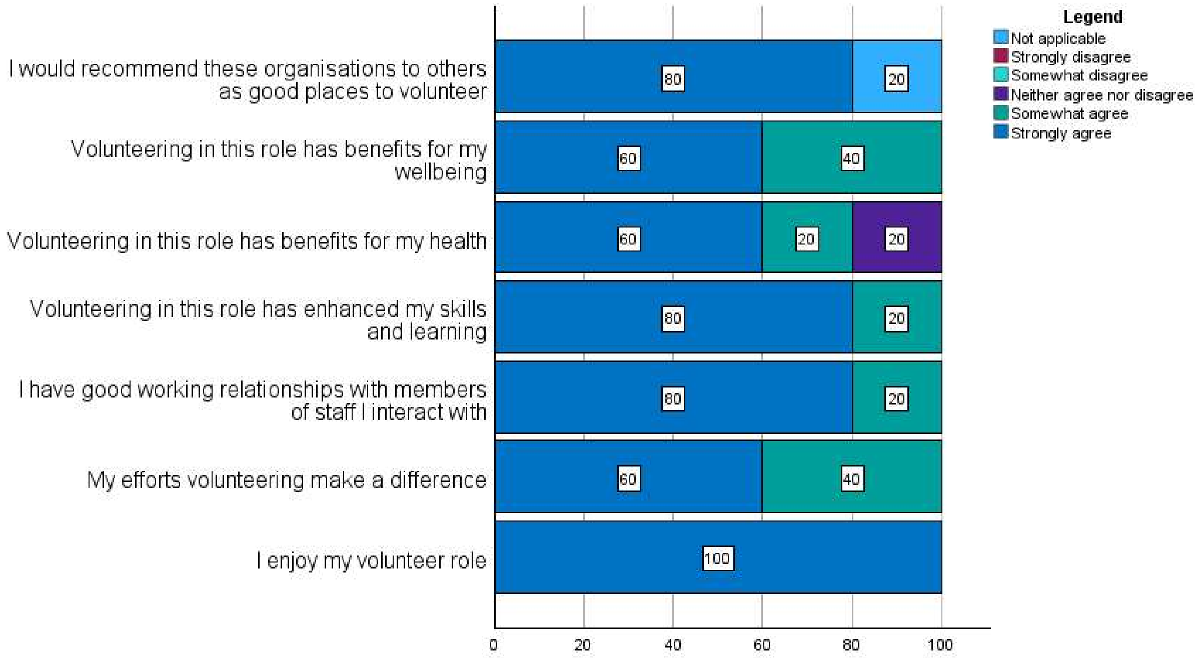

Figure 7. 2: volunteer responses, percentage agree/disagree with statements

Stakeholders and the Estate's thought leadership role

Strategic partners, in particular, highly valued the Estate's thought leadership role within the public realm. Stakeholders recognised the Estate as carrying out this role across the Estate's portfolio but particularly in terms of landscape scale nature restoration, agriculture and responsible development. #Community2 on this:

"From a financial and an environmental point of view, [they're trying to] be as innovative as they can in those respects as well… I think the Estate is seen as a leader, isn't it, in the country… I think if I were was to use one word to describe it… I would use pioneering." #Community2

#StrategicPartner1 recognised the Estate's thought leadership role when pursuing commercial and residential development opportunities. To provide an example, #StrategicPartner1 recalled a development proposal in which restoration of a sensitive area of heathland was intended as a subsidiary benefit of the main development. As a result of Brexit, the original planned development was not able to go ahead but the Estate pressed on with the ecological restoration work regardless. #StrategicPartner1 explains:

"… and strictly speaking they didn't have to do that until the point at which the scheme was developed. Now, because of Brexit, that scheme never did get developed… But they did it anyway,

they did that restoration anyway. It gives you an example of how proactive the Estate is on these things." #StrategicPartner1

As we saw in Chapter 4, the Estate's pursuit of development opportunities could at times cause tension with some of its stakeholders. #StrategicPartner5, a stakeholder who is not a natural ideological ally of large rural estates, addressed this challenge, but was emphatic that the Estate's leadership has led to 'real action' for nature:

"[Clinton Devon deals with] quite a lot of naysayers... and some of them were definitely saying this is just greenwashing so you can get away with the other thing. But at least it got done. I could take you to plenty of other landscapes where things are not getting done ... because people aren't stepping up and showing thought leadership and then real action on the ground." #StrategicPartner5

Strategic partners also valued the Estate's willingness to contribute to national conversations which could hold wider, sometimes intangible benefits for their peers within the land management community. #StrategicPartner3 on this:

"Perhaps a more important place to speak is more on a national stage... rural folk already get it. Yeah, the ambassadorship, I think that is of value and I think they do reach beyond farming, partly because [for] the Estate itself... farming is a minor part of their activities." #StrategicPartner3

While #StrategicPartner3 valued the Estate's leadership role within the farming community, they pointed out that the Estate's capacity to take risks and innovate was very different to typical Devon farmers, saying that other farmers didn't, "have the whole of the Lower Otter Valley to play with." With this in mind, #StrategicPartner3 hoped the Estate would be able to use their profile as leaders within the agricultural policy space to tell the story not only of nature restoration but also of food production.

Community experiences of citizen science and landscape restoration

Volunteer efforts to support heathland scrub clearance and manage invasive species such as Himalayan balsam are valued not only by Clinton Devon, but also by the wider community of stakeholders who access greenspace on the Estate. #Community5 has lived in the vicinity of the Estate throughout their life and contrasts the quality of the landscape with that which the Estate was able to deliver in the past.

"I think that's changed dramatically in my view. I'm not sure what staffing numbers are or anything, but it's evident if you go out there, you can see work parties clearing... I wouldn't know what the percentage of paid employees and voluntary workers are making up those work parties, but that's just not an issue really, it doesn't matter. The point is the work is being done." #Community5

The employees and volunteers working out on the Estate are able to articulate the reasons behind the heathland management and connect this to species habitat needs. This interpersonal communication of the management strategy is valued by those accessing the greenspace, such as #Community4:

"I've been speaking with some of the guys working up there recently, but they're doing lots and lots of clearing of the heathland, clearing back mainly birch... they're stripping it all back to allow all the undergrowth to come back through again so that we allow nightjars back in." #Community4

As we saw in section 7.4, the team at Clinton Devon has been increasing their capacity to support citizen scientists in order to continue to monitor progress in meeting environmental and biodiversity targets on the Estate. Interestingly, of those stakeholders who came forward for interview #Community1, #Community2, #Community5 and #Community6 do not consider themselves to be formal volunteers with the Estate, but carry out ecological monitoring within the Estate's boundaries or volunteer with neighbouring organisations. #Community1 and #Community5, for example, record species numbers on Clinton Devon Estates land and report these but do not necessarily log this activity with teams at the Estate.

"… so they're accessible if you just go on to I-naturalist and zoom in on the map… I think I've got about 80 species recorded on Mutters Moor and another 60 odd, I think on Aylesbeare Common." #Community1

"The records are used nationally as well as locally, so it all feeds into a bigger picture. The particular [species that's been reintroduced] has been proven to adapt well to its new environment. It's been breeding very successfully over a number of years and it's since the initial area of release, it's expanded quite a bit. So it's a very successful enterprise." #Community5

The Estate has built a partnership with a local community organisation in order to work together to monitor water quality in the River Otter. In so doing, the Estate has potentially opened itself up to criticism as a landowner with ultimate responsibility for farming activity within this catchment. However, the response from the local community group carrying out the citizen science has been largely positive and constructive, as #Community2 explains:

So they're looking at doing citizen science for testing the waters of the River Otter … I think the nitrate levels are exceedingly high. So they're working on that … which is amazing and so you know I think working with organisations like that is really good." #Community2

Stakeholders and sharing best practice from the Estate

A number of stakeholders who participated in interviews acknowledged wider impacts to society of knowledge generated as a result of projects led by the Estate. This included #StrategicPartner1, #StrategicPartner2 #StrategicPartner4 and #StrategicPartner5, for example.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, public sector strategic partners valued the knowledge created and shared through large landscape-scale projects – such as the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) or the River Otter Beaver trial – the learnings of which are of ongoing significance to a wider community of stakeholders. #StrategicPartner5 on this:

"And there's definite commonalities there that you could probably take to any place that's going to suffer from catastrophic sea level rise, storm surges. And so, right guys, we need to manage this coastal realignment here. What we've learned in other places, both in France and England, is that it's best done as a co-creation. There's a sort of dialogue based, participatory based exercise. And we're going to start on that now, right from the beginning, day one." #StrategicPartner5

However, #StrategicPartner1 and #StrategicPartner2 also pointed to economic and place-based partnership activities producing knowledge and best practice of impact beyond the boundaries of the Estate. #StrategicPartner1 uses housing and commercial development partnership projects with Clinton Devon Estates to demonstrate best practice to others. For #StrategicPartner1, the exemplar projects delivered in partnership with the Estate are ones in which it is possible to demonstrate quality, sensitivity to place, community benefits and affordability. #StrategicPartner1 on this:

"When we have this sort of conversation with parish councils or communities, we can point them towards [this Clinton Devon led] … nationally award-winning, you know housing development… as an exemplar. [Or this Clinton Devon led development]… where we worked exceptionally hard and gave a lot of community benefits … So you can say, well, if you think we're just about the bottom line, go and look at that development over there. That's not what you'd expect from another [developer]." #StrategicPartner1

Similarly, #StrategicPartner2 suggested that ongoing partnership working with the Estate and developing those ongoing relationships over a number of years has enabled the creation of approaches and knowledge outputs of use to wider society.

"[Our project work with the Estate] is really valued by Natural England. They see it's working really well. It's been [lauded] as a kind of nationally successful approach… I think it demonstrates that if you have worked together, you can deal with these things and can deal with it in a really positive way. Yeah, that's a two-way process and the Estate has been really, really good at doing that." #StrategicPartner2

Looking towards the future, some stakeholders pointed to the Heaths to Sea project and other nature restoration projects led by the Estate and expressed a greater willingness to be more involved in order to implement project findings within their own enterprise or community group. These stakeholders included farming and commercial tenants and those who were not within the anticipated geography of the Heaths to Sea project. As #Community1 noted, the Estate have an opportunity to enhance the ripple effect of their project and multiply the benefits across neighbouring land parcels.

Well, you've got the heaths to see project going on. It's going to be interesting what they're going to do on those fields… So I think we'll be keeping a close eye on what's happening in the Otter… we're always looking around what other people are doing… in a way, the more, the more Clinton share what they're up to, the more they can amplify their effect … Now everybody bleats on about Knepp, and that's had a massive ripple effect … And so Clinton Devon doing wonderful things for nature and letting people know about it will have an effect way beyond their Estate." #Community1

7.8 Social value of supporting knowledge generation

Supporting outdoor education

Published research was used to determine the average financial impact to the public sector of supporting children to engage in outdoor education. Based on this research, a per pupil financial proxy of £1,968.88 (2022 prices) was calculated. This was adjusted for inflation and an initial attribution of 0.5 applied to acknowledge that pupils visiting the Estate are also likely to be visiting other outdoor learning locations over the course of a year. An additional attribution factor was applied based on the Estate's own depth of engagement ranking – see Technical Annex B.

Clinton Devon Estates data estimating the number of school pupils attending outdoor education events was used to calculate the social value of this activity – see table 7.1.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Public sector financial impact	
Providing outdoor education opportunities	£474,619

Table 7. 1: Social value calculations – outdoor education offer (actual 2024/25)

As noted in section 7.3, additional project activities led by the Estate offer an opportunity for the Estate to rapidly scale their outdoor education offer to local schools and colleges. Table 7.2 uses engagement data from the LORP project to estimate the social value of delivery at this scale (2022 prices).

Social value calculation	**2021/22**
Public sector financial impact	
Providing outdoor education opportunities	£10,738,275

Table 7. 2: Social value calculations – enhanced outdoor education offer (LORP)

Volunteering and citizen science

A financial proxy of £1,456 (2019 prices) was created to represent the life satisfaction impact of participating in regular volunteering activity. This was adjusted for inflation. The financial proxy was sense-checked against the Stakeholder Survey data. See Technical Annex B.

Known data on volunteering numbers from the Clinton Devon Estate was used to calculate the social value of volunteering on the Estate – see table 7.3.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Wellbeing uplift	
Volunteering	£254,769

Table 7. 3: Social value calculations – wellbeing uplift volunteering

Accessing archives

Published research indicates the willingness-to-pay (stated preference) for users of archives. The financial proxy of £40.52 (2020 prices) was adjusted for inflation and applied to known data about in-person visits to the Rolle Estate Office archive. Enquiries dealt with via the telephone or at the Devon Heritage Centre were not included in this calculation. See Technical Annex B and table 7.4 for more information.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Stated preference	
Visiting archives	£202

Table 7. 4: Social value calculations – accessing archives

8. Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents a summary of the findings from the Value of a Rural Estate project. First, the chapter gives a summary of overall findings, pointing to key lessons from each individual chapter. Next, we present a summary of the economic analysis and social value calculations made. We place these into context by including the GVA generated by hectare and a social value benefit-cost ratio. Finally, the chapter indicates some possible areas for further research in order to build upon these findings.

8.2 Summary of findings

The introductory Chapter 1 served to illustrate the changing operating context for rural estates which has emerged since the turn of the century. Against a backdrop of declining income from traditional land-based production, rural estates are increasingly called upon to deliver environmental goods and services within their landholdings, as well as to engage in an energy security agenda. Rural estates are also subject to a challenging regulatory framework, across their roles as landlords, landowners and small or medium-sized businesses. Within this context, we introduced Clinton Devon Estates and established that the Estate is at the forefront of engaging with this changing relationship between the state and large rural landowners.

Despite increasingly being asked to deliver against a wide-ranging Government agenda, we saw in Chapter 2 that progress by the rural estates community in general to measure and publish progress in delivering against social, environmental and economic outcomes was variable and inconsistent. While a great deal of progress has been made by some Estates, including Clinton Devon Estates, to measure natural capital, there has been less transparent reporting of social value generation and contributions to economic growth. Chapter 2 also outlines the specific methodology for this project, including the use of social value calculations to provide a snapshot of Clinton Devon Estate's contribution to delivering social benefits through its day-to-day operations and project-based activity. We demonstrate how the different methods adopted across the project combine to provide a robust insight into the contributions made by the Estate. This includes for example, using stakeholder survey responses to reasonably apportion social value to the Estate's activity, encompassing both positive and negative impacts, where known.

Chapter 3 took a more detailed look at the organisation of Clinton Devon Estates and examined how the values of the Estate are communicated and upheld across the family, trustees and management team. We saw how concerted efforts by the organisation have helped to codify the values, enabling more agile and values-aligned decision making. Statistical analysis of stakeholder's understanding of the Estate's values and their own values enables a greater understanding of where the estate is well aligned with stakeholder value perceptions (sustainability, stewardship and supporting the rural economy) and where there is a misalignment between the Estate and stakeholder value perceptions (supporting the community, integrity). Interestingly, stakeholders who took part in interviews were able to point to numerous examples of the Estate acting with integrity – but did not necessarily use this language to describe their examples. We also saw the varied strategies the Estate uses to build social capital with stakeholders, including overt, passive and strategic efforts to build capital, for example. We also saw the impacts for the Estate of efforts to build community with regular leisure visitors, as these stakeholders with closer ties are able to advocate on behalf of the Estate to others.

In Chapter 4 we explored the Estate's contributions to the rural economy and creating rural employment. In this chapter we looked at the ways in which the Estate values influence the organisation of production within its in-hand farming and forestry businesses, but also across tenant farming and commercial enterprises. We found that the Estate has formed strong working relationships with tenant businesses operating from the Estate, with some tenants keen to have greater involvement in the Estate's nature restoration and sustainability agenda. We also saw the emergence of a theme which suggests that some of the Estate's long-standing stakeholders may be struggling with the professional transition of the Estate. We made an estimate of the Estates Gross Value Added (GVA) across its direct operations, spend with suppliers and the tenant and other businesses associated with the Estate. We also cautiously estimated the indirect impacts of this GVA using national multipliers. We looked at the social value generated through providing employment opportunities and were able to make two social value calculations, using the stakeholder survey responses, to demonstrate the impact of high-quality employment and baseline employment across the Estate and its allied businesses.

In Chapter 5 we tackled an emergent but less measurable role for the Estate, as placeshapers within the local areas in which they are major landowners. We looked at the ways in which the Estate enacts this placeshaping role, via nature restoration projects, commercial and residential developments and by pursuing an energy security agenda. In this chapter we found that pursuing placeshaping projects can present significant challenges for the Estate in engaging with a variety of stakeholders and bringing those stakeholders along with them from planning to completion of projects. While stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive about the Estate's placeshaping achievements, there continued to be nervousness from some stakeholders about future developments and conflation between development ambitions and nature restoration goals. Strategic Partners suggested a greater openness about the challenges of the financing landscape scale restoration work, for example, might help to support engagement on this issue.

Chapter 6 explored the ways in which the Estate supports the local community, principally through the provision of housing for rent and access to land for hobbies and leisure. We learnt about the challenges of maintaining a letting portfolio primarily comprised of historic properties and detailed the social value generated by improving the energy efficiency of properties. Residential tenants' reflections on the Estate's achievements within this theme were varied, pointing to rising rents and the need for ongoing repairs in some properties. There was also a continuing theme of some long-standing stakeholders of the Estate finding the increasing professionalisation of the Estate a challenging transition. Conversely, some residential tenants were extremely positive about their experiences with the Estate, pointing to supportive, helpful relationships with particular employees. Leisure visitors reflected on the health and wellbeing benefits offered by access to the Estate's greenspace and pointed out that projects like LORP had increased accessibility to nature to a wide range of people of different abilities. We found that leisure visitors with closer ties to the Estate appreciated the permissive way in which the Estate managed access to its greenspace, which enabled community groups and special interest groups to meet and gain wellbeing benefits.

Chapter 7 examined the Estate's thought leadership role within the rural estate community and engagement by the Estate in knowledge generation activities. We saw how room for senior managers at the Estate to engage with networks and partnerships of national importance has enabled the Estate to contribute to the formation of national policy. The Estate's ongoing engagement with local partnerships and support for research projects has also enabled it to act directly to capitalise on opportunity as they arise, or to support partners to bid for funding to improve environmental outcomes across the wider landscape. Engagement with the Estate's archive has enabled the Estate and partners to draw on historic records in order to understand better how the landscape has changed over time, and how contemporary projects can reflect on or restore the conditions of the past. We learnt that the Estate's support for citizen science extends beyond its existing arrangements with individual volunteers, as independent naturalists are also encouraged by the permissive access to the Estate's greenspace to conduct independent monitoring activity. Stakeholders pointed out where they were able to use learning from project work with the Estate as best practice examples when working with others. Stakeholders suggested that learning from the Heaths to Sea project could have an impact beyond the borders of the Estate as knowledge from the project is shared widely across stakeholder groups.

8.3 Summary of economic and social value generated

In Chapter 4 we estimated the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the activity of the Estate, the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, the Estate's spending on suppliers and the activities of tenant and licensed businesses operating on Estate land. GVA helps to demonstrate the impact the activity of the Estate is having more broadly on the local and regional economy. A summary of the direct GVA estimates for the Estate, supplier spend and its allied businesses is provided in Table 8.1. This total direct GVA across the Estate, allied organisations, tenants, licensed businesses and spend with suppliers represents a GVA of £14,786 per hectare (2024/25).

Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the Estate and allied businesses

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Direct GVA: Clinton Devon Estates and conservation group	£7,200,818	£5,904,725	£7,613,297
Direct GVA: Spending with suppliers	No data	£4,205,027	£4,331,178
Direct GVA: tenant businesses	£125,212,757	£130,233,526	£134,142,587
Direct GVA: Licensed businesses operating on Clinton Devon Estates land	£1,652,625	£1,718,730	£1,770,292
Total direct GVA	**£134,066,200**	**£142,062,008**	**£147,857,354**

Table 8. 1: Estimates of total direct GVA across Clinton Devon Estates operations (2024/25)

Across Chapters 4 to 7 we calculated the social value generated as a result of key activities of the Estate. Table 8.2 provides a summary of the social value estimated to be associated with core business and project activity in 2024/25. It is worth reiterating that this methodology is reliant on available research which can reasonably be used to attribute the impact of interventions or provision of services to social value financial proxies. Some aspects of the Estate's activity which might be expected to generate social value are not easily measurable at this time – more on this in section 8.4.

Social value calculation	**2024/25**
Employment social value	£5,990,231
Moving to a new, affordable home	£138,212
Greenspace recreational welfare value	£10,851,112
Supporting at-risk tenants to avoid eviction	£69,605
Improved rented housing	£294,412
Attending community events (cultural)	£3,240,194
Attending public engagement events	£250,036
Dealing with flytipping	£102,368
Outdoor education	£474,619
Volunteering	£254,769
Visiting archives	£202
Total measurable social value	**£21,665,760**

Table 8. 2: Estimate of total measurable social value generated across Clinton Devon Estates and PHCT

Overall, we find that at least £3.36 of social value is generated for every £1 invested via Clinton Devon Estates.

8.4 Areas for future research

The Value of a Rural Estate project had a broad remit to understand and measure, where possible, the economic, social and environmental impacts generated as a result of the activities of Clinton Devon Estates, but also to situate this research within the wider context of rural estates more broadly, and how their activities might be benchmarked. With this in mind, we have highlighted a number of areas which would benefit from further research to support the work of Clinton Devon Estates and other rural estates looking to measure their impact in future.

- Rural estates cover a diversity of sizes, geographic locations, production and diversification types. Further research to understand the different business strategies of rural estates – production-led, tourism-led, diversification-led etc. – would help support the sector to develop benchmarking tools which are meaningful to groups of rural estates adopting similar strategies.
- Mammalian pests pose a threat to broadleaf woodland restoration efforts. Estates such as Clinton Devon Estates are investing in deer and grey squirrel control efforts, which will have an impact beyond the borders of the Estate and benefit neighbours engaged in tree planting.

Further research to understand the landscape scale implications of having centres of good practice for mammalian pest control would be help support the Government's tree cover targets.

- For Clinton Devon Estates, developing a low-impact method of logging employee time spend dealing with environmental challenges (flytipping, littering, dog-fouling) may help to inform a more detailed project of this type in future. The Estate and/or the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust may also find it useful to find low-impact ways to record activity of independent naturalists conducting monitoring on the Estate who may not be captured within the Estate's existing volunteer logs.
- While an overall social value benefit to cost ratio has been produced for this project, the Estate may find it useful to conduct additional fine-grained analysis to determine the social value cost-benefit ratio of individual activities they carry out on the Estate.
- Some aspects of the Estate's activities, particularly around placeshaping and thought leadership, are particularly difficult to measure within a social valuation methodology. Delivery of infrastructure to support renewable energy production and a decentralised grid, for example, is critical, but the benefits are not felt by individual residents and so are difficult to place a social value on. There are similar complexity challenges to measuring the impact of flood prevention activities. Open access map-based tools which capture action on some of these landscape scale challenges and indicate the benefits to the surrounding geography would be useful.
- Dame Batters (2025) farm profitability report noted the difficulty in capturing the real economic impact of agriculture. Rural estates like Clinton Devon Estates, which holds good quality data on supplier spending, could provide a case study to illuminate the agricultural added value from spend with feed suppliers, machinery suppliers, contractors and vets, as well as understanding spend and employment along the supply chains. A case study of this type could also illustrate the different multiplier effects of different farm production types (energy crops, food crops, farming for nature etc.).
- Stakeholders have indicated that investment in knowledge generation and learning which takes place on the Estate has a ripple effect, with neighbouring community groups, landowners and other projects able to implement the findings where appropriate within their own local areas. Further research to understand the relationship between investment in knowledge generation and dissemination, for example within the Heaths to Sea project, and neighbouring geographies adopting this learning would be useful in order to quantify this ripple effect.

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